

an old saying about government that waste is any program which we do not agree with or from which we do not derive a benefit. The same could be said for some forms of government intrusion, and that is a major argument you are going to hear in opposition to the bill today. How many times have we heard that there ought to be a law concerning some perceived inequity or treatment in our society, and it usually boils down to this. Occasionally government must do what we, as citizens, refuse to do for ourselves, even though we know it is the right thing to do. If there were no laws concerning equal opportunity, minimum wage, child labor, food and drug safety, safety in the workplace, the list is endless, there would be no laws regarding those issues. Do you think society would be doing the right thing? And, obviously, the answer is no. Should we be left to make our own decision in all of these matters? If we did, there would be absolute chaos in our society. The reason why government is so pervasive is because we ask so much of it, and much of what we ask of our government is to require the citizens to do the right thing, to behave responsibly, and to be good citizens. Senators, we are asking no more of our citizens by asking them to wear a safety belt whenever they use the public roads of this state, than we are of any other individuals in Nebraska. An individual driver's autonomy on the road can be curtailed by state regulation for the public safety and welfare. We regulate drivers, their vehicles, and the roadways. We license individuals. We require them to wear eyeglasses if they need them. We require them to follow established traffic rules and regulations. We require them to drive vehicles which are in good working order. We set limits regarding the amount of alcohol which a driver can have when he is driving a motor vehicle, and we require the manufacturers of motor vehicles to install padded dashboards, safety glass, and safety belts. Manufacturers are required to put safety belts in automobiles. It makes sense that we require our citizens to use what we require the manufacturer to put in the automobile. The unfortunate aspect of this law is that it is the only way some people will wear safety belts. Look at the increase in use from 1984, when we did not have a law, and in 1985 when we did. We had 23 percent of the people in Nebraska wearing safety belts in 1984, 45 percent of our citizens wore them in 1985. In 1986, the year the bill was defeated by referendum, the usage rate was 40 percent. Today it is 32 percent. Nebraska is one of the lowest percentage usage rates in the country, and we are one of only nine states that does not have a safety belt law. I have received many letters and seen many letters to the editor from