

den of Daniels. I know that there probably will not be a full complement of senators here this morning because the issue is very emotional. It is charged with, some people feel, political ramifications. It is extremely controversial and it also is fraught with hatred, ignorance and discrimination. What this bill, LB 21, would do is make, as a part of our general law prohibiting discrimination based on race, gender and other elements with which we're familiar, it would add "sexual orientation" as one of those factors which could not be the basis for discriminating against a person in the workplace, and that includes applying for a job, being hired, if hired, being promoted and accorded all of the benefits and rights that go along with employment. For the sake of the record sometimes...let me back up a second. What we do in the Legislature is attempt to educate the public and bring some enlightenment. We are, as elected officials, to show by our example what we feel is the appropriate attitude that society ought to adopt toward all members of society. When we hear the term gay, homosexual or lesbian, there is usually a reaction that is so strong it can almost be physical. In this society, there is a lot of ignorance about homosexuality. We know that in every area ignorance of something will generate fear. Fear in this instance is the sire of hatred and contempt. This hatred, fear and contempt lead to the discrimination that I am trying to get the Legislature to prohibit. I should point out to you that our policies, our employment policies as a Legislature are enlightened. We do not allow sexual orientation to be a basis for discriminating against anybody. This will not be a shock to some and it will be a shock to others. We don't know who in this room, if all the facts were known, would be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation. People who have this orientation are just that, people. They are human beings. They are our brothers, they are our sisters, aunts, uncles and, to the shock of many people, they are even parents. Because of the strong antigay attitude in this society people from being small children who knew that they were not heterosexual felt, because of the pressures brought to bear on such a person, that they had to assume a traditional sexual role. So they got married, they had families and as they got older and reached the point of not being so much concerned about what other people in society thought, as in fulfilling themselves as human beings, they, what is called, came out of the closet. One such case happened to a woman who was a high-ranking military officer. She had been to Vietnam, she had an exemplary military career and she was being considered for a