

SENATOR HUDKINS: Thank you, Madam President and members of the body, I, too, am opposed to the Avery amendment to this bill. When I first was made aware of the bill I was teasing a newspaper editor friend of mine, well you'll just print everything in smaller type and he said, no, that's not how it works, that the advertising is charged on a per square inch of paper and not only that, but the costs for legal advertising are at a much lower rate than the display advertising. It has been six years since the legal notice rates have risen and in those few years paper publishers have had to meet other costs that have risen without their control, two of these include the postage rates and the newsprint. One publisher has said that in the past 6 years postage has risen 33 percent and the newsprint has risen 38 percent. Well this bill is a phase-in of the increased rates. This will allow the subdivisions to plan and to budget for the increases. In 1965 there were 304 newspapers in this state and now there are 198 newspapers. Some papers obviously were not profitable and had to cease operations. Well not everybody in the state needs to have all of the news from the Omaha paper or the Lincoln paper or even the Scottsbluff paper. They want to know the news in their county and in their community. There were comments on previous debate that if the small papers aren't managed well, let them go broke. Well they have. We want people to be involved and we want them to be informed and they can't be either one if there isn't a newspaper to meet their needs. If we as a body were inclined to allow millions of dollars in tax benefits to hopefully lure businesses to Nebraska then I would hope that we would allow smaller businesses, local businesses to raise their legal notice rate at least every six years to stay in business. This bill is a compromise on what the rate will be. It's not an automatic raise so I am opposed to this particular amendment and hope that you would likewise vote against it. Thank you.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Hudkins. Senator Schellpeper.

SENATOR SCHELLPEPER: Thank you, Madam Chairman and members, I also rise in opposition to the Avery amendment. I think you have to realize that there hasn't been any rate increase since 1989. In the original bill, 418, that came before our committee, it would have allowed DAS to adjust the rates any time that they thought needed to and with the committee amendments and also under the Maurstad amendment they cannot do that. They'd have to come back to this body if they want to