

investigating. At the federal level, it became necessary to create the Office of the Independent Counsel, which is known as the special prosecutor. That was so that a greater degree of independence would be available when high ranking governmental officials would have to be investigated based on their conduct. I think it would be a terrible disregard for the rights of individuals who are discriminated against, who will be discriminated against to place control of this commission in the hands of any Governor. I happened to discuss Gentle Ben, because he happens to be sitting in that position now. But were I the Governor, and you know that I am known for my fairness, my objectivity, my willingness to listen to all the sides of the question, but mainly not to be intimidated by any powerful, special interest group, even I, were I Governor, should not have this kind of authority over an entity such as this. Now I will tell you about my amendment. It touches a sensitive issue which, in 1996, ought not be sensitive anymore. We should be sensitive to it, but the issue should not be sensitive in the sense of it being one that generates fear, in some people loathing, and in others total confusion. I am talking about the issue of a person being gay, if he is a man, lesbian, if she is a woman, and it relates to a person who has amorous inclinations toward a member of the same sex. That is the aspect of the amendment which most of the members will be hung up on. But what this amendment really seeks to do is to prevent and prohibit discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation, whether that orientation is gay, heterosexual, or bisexual. But because of the conservative and, in my opinion, backward attitude of many Nebraskans in many instances, the only thing that will be seen in this amendment is the aspect of it that relates to those who are deemed to be gay or lesbian. I would like, before I go into specifics on the amendment, to refer you to page 13, which relates existing state law. And it lays out the policy of this state. And as most policies, it is noble in intent, it is grand in its scope, but it is not broad enough in its sweep, unless we add the amendment that I'm offering. This begins at line 5 on page 13, and it's existing language from 48-1101. It is the policy of this state to foster the employment of all employable persons in the state on the basis of merit, regardless of their race, color, religion, sex, disability, marital status, age, national origin, and my amendment would say, "or sexual orientation", and to safeguard their right to obtain and hold employment without discrimination because of their race, color, religion, sex, disability, marital