

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

March 4, 1999

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to...in the Government Committee, to allow independents to vote in whichever of the party primaries they might choose. They can do that now for elections for federal...federal elections--U.S. senators, congressmen. They can't do that for any other candidates. That bill didn't have a happy fate in the Government Committee and that's over with, but I thought the point of the bill was exactly one that Senator Chambers raised. I don't believe that the election process, in any respect, belongs to either of the political parties. I believe very firmly that it belongs to the people of the state of Nebraska. And that the process is designed not to produce candidates necessarily for political parties. It is designed to produce elected officials that will serve us and perform the functions of government. It does not...the election process, I agree completely with Senator Chambers, the election process does not, should not, and any implication that it does should be removed, that it does not belong to the political parties. The political parties have a valid place, a valid role to play in our political process. They can define issues. They can support candidates if they choose to. But the election process does not belong to them; it belongs to us.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. Senator Schimek, please.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I would submit that the political parties are us, not them, and say that we are the only state, as to the best of my knowledge anyway, that actually has that provision about independents being able to pick up a ballot for the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate seats, and that is because of a court decision that came down about probably 8, 10...well, actually, before I got in the Legislature, probably more like 12 years ago, and it basically said that you have to allow voters, the same voters in your races for the House and Senate, that you allow in your legislative races. And so this is uniquely a Nebraska situation. This does not occur in other states. But, having said all that, I do wish to withdraw this amendment but, before I do, I would just like to say this is a ballot issue we're talking about here. It can't possibly go before the voters until next May or next November, depending on how many votes it gets on Final Reading, so just keep that in mind. I