

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

April 22, 1999 LB 150

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: The amendment is adopted.

CLERK: Senator Bruning would move to amend. (AM0942, Legislative Journal pages 1610-1611.)

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Senator Bruning, you're recognized on AM0942 to LB 150.

SENATOR BRUNING: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, my intention is not to bring this amendment to a vote. My intention is to talk for a couple of minutes about an issue that I think is of extreme importance to the state and to the people of the state. What this particular amendment does is it puts back into statute the prohibition that prevents public power districts from operating as telephone companies. I don't mean to pick on public power districts, but the point I mean to make is this. In an era of levy lids, of levy limits, of tightening budgets for political subdivisions, our cities, our public power districts, various governmental subdivisions are looking for any way to make money, and that includes areas that the private sector is already serving. Up in Norfolk, we have a public power district, Nebraska Public Power District, who has said, by the way, I should give them credit here, they did say at a meeting they will not get into the telephone business over the next year. However, they were serving Norfolk Community College. US West could have done that. So what you're doing when you allow public entities to get into private businesses is you're taking away income from tax-paying entities and giving it to entities that don't pay taxes. You're taking away business from entities that have a reason to become more efficient, the profit motive, to entities that don't have a reason to become more efficient because they're in the public sector and they can raise money with taxes. And, for me, if we're going to be a capitalist society, which the United States has been for more than 200 years, we need to encourage efficiency. We need to encourage businesses to thrive and succeed. They pay taxes. They support the government. The people that own the businesses pay taxes and support the government. We don't need the public sector to get into areas that the private sector is already serving. I see Senator Janssen is leaving. I don't mean to pick on him but, for example, let's say the city of Hooper decided to get into the grocery business. Do they need to do