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April 12, 2000 LB 1021

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Bruning. Senator Coordsen on the motion to bracket LB 1021.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Senator Bruning, for bringing the bracket motion, to give us a chance to take another look at LB 1021. We did talk about this bill on Select File at great length, I think. And the longer we talked about it and the more that amendments were proposed to this bill, the more unsure many of us were as to what in fact the impact of it would be. Senator Bruning did a good job of laying out for us some of his concerns. And I think those are in fact the major concerns that most of us have with that. My concern with changing statutes that have worked well for so many years is that we are unintentionally creating a trap for elected officials across the state. Bear in mind, in spite of what might be written about us, in spite of what might be said about us, in spite of what we might even think of ourselves, we are in fact ordinary citizens, of many different ages and many different professions, many different sets of life experiences. And none of us are experts, I think...there may be an exception or two in this body...on campaign finance law. Most of us, for an example, have a treasurer who we expect to look after those things. According to informal conversations with personnel of Accountability and Disclosure, the problems, if any, that they found, have to do with reporting and not being aware of all of the intricacies of both campaign reporting as well as the reporting of the financial disclosure statements that we have to do on an annual basis, from which people have said, in some cases, aha, this official reported this gift, therefore it's bad. Just think about that. Aha, this has been reported, therefore it's bad. I do believe that some modernization of the lobby reporting system that would more accurately reflect what the professional representatives of groups and individuals and groups of individuals are expending their resources on might be appropriate. I think most of us are uncomfortable with being painted with a broad brush of adding up all of the reported lobbying expenses from organizations, as well as individuals, and dividing that by 49 and saying, aha, they're all on the take. To me, this indicates all of the things that are bad with people who wish to have better government. The first thing that one needs to do is identify if there's a problem that needs to be corrected. Not an outhouse problem that you thought up on