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FLOOR DEBATE

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What I'm offering is an amendment that will open this to everybody who wants to stand out in the street and collect this money, as long as it's for a charitable or community development purpose. This is what the amendment would say: "Any ordinance enacted pursuant to this subsection shall be a general ordinance which shall not exclude or give preference to any individual or the members of any organization, association or group. Any ordinance whose terms or provisions do not strictly comply with this subsection is void." That is the amendment. I showed it to Senator Pedersen. He discussed it with some of the people who are interested in this bill. I would like to see the bill scrapped, but I have bigger fish to fry this session. And on some other bills that I oppose I will try to get them in better shape, instead of just digging in my heels and saying it's all or nothing. But you should keep in mind that hazards are being created. Senator Pedersen had to bring this bill because up to this point the Legislature has been too wise to allow city councils to authorize this kind of dangerous begging and panhandling. And I call it panhandling whether it's a police officer, a firefighter, a representative of some exotic religion, or just a group of people who get together and decide they want to raise some money because the Sienna House needs it. For those who are unaware of it, that's a place in Omaha which provides shelter for the homeless. Anybody could get out there. And if the city council enacted an ordinance and it was in any way discriminatory against any individual or group, the ordinance would be void. It would not empower or authorize, legally, anybody to be out there collecting money. So it's an amendment that says the ordinance applies to everybody or it applies to nobody. Suppose you were driving east on Dodge Street, and you're west of 72nd, so you're going to drive across 72nd and continue on your way. Right after you cross the intersection...well, just before you cross the intersection, you see somebody standing out there with a bucket in traffic. So you're puzzled about this, and you make an evasive move, and miss that person, but you almost cause an accident because the person next to you has to swerve to keep from being hit by you. So you breathe a great sigh of relief, drive carefully through the intersection. Then, lo and behold, bless Peter, there's another one of these obstructionists standing in the street with a bucket, saying, give me some money. And you're saying, why