

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

March 18, 2003 LB 608

requires more information from LB 775 applicants, and it does so while retaining the committee's language requiring more specific information regarding employment at specific projects. Let's turn first to striking the language with regard to this information going to the Legislative Fiscal Office. I said before, I want to say again, this is not a question about trusting the Legislative Fiscal Office. Of course I do. This provision is too much of a change from prior practice and I respectfully suggest it's not justified, because we do also trust our Nebraska Department of Revenue. I think we do also believe that they do an excellent job of discharging, faithfully and fully, all of the duties which we have imposed upon them by statute. And I think there has been no indication of any inadequacy on the part of the Nebraska Department of Revenue to enforce whatever it is we legislate and mandate. But please keep in mind businesses expect to provide their tax return information only to a Department of Revenue. These departments are equipped to handle confidential information. They have done it, they are doing it, they will do it. The culture of that agency is confidential. It's a considerable departure from that and from standard practice to start providing taxpayer-specific information to the legislative branch of government. Think about it. Do we really want taxpayer-specific information to start flowing from the executive branch to the legislative branch? If you think it'd be fine here, think about it at the federal level and decide whether you'd like it. We've had scandals in that regard. The expectation is that tax return information goes only to an executive department and that it is insulated from politics by both law and practice. Providing specific information to a legislative agency that is not equipped for that specific information and that has a culture of disclosure will not be well received in the marketplace in the competition for companies, and let me elaborate on that point, please. What does our Legislative Fiscal Office specialize in? These are experts in dealing with all sorts of complex and enormous amounts of data and feeding it to us and providing it to us for our use, and we're not specialists as they are, and providing it to the news media. In other words, the whole culture of the Legislative Fiscal Office is to do analysis and then to lead and to support us and to disclose it to the public. The Legislative Fiscal Office is open. Section 50-419 of our