

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

March 28, 2003

LB 439

full-time permanent protection, but that is not an immediate help in the Capitol Building or surrounding state offices. Now the obvious question is, well, do you really think that we need more security? If there's no need for increased security in the Capitol complex why then does the Governor have full-time security? Why was a fence installed around his mansion, his residence, excuse me? Why is the Supreme Court, upstairs in this very building, barred from public access, its clerks working behind bullet-proof glass? Why did the Hall of Justice building, only a few blocks away, upgrade its own security measures by adding armed guards and metal detectors? None of those places or individuals are any more high-profile or at greater risk than the Legislature and surrounding state offices; nevertheless, they have taken proactive measures. Ten years ago, a bill like this would not have rated a second glance. Today's world is quite different. When I brought this issue up initially, people immediately thought of Oklahoma City and Timothy McVeigh. Now I suppose September 11 is what comes to mind. McVeigh did not inspire my original bill, and Osama bin Laden is not the reason that I agreed to carry LB 439. The bill is not designed to deal with those types of situations. There's nothing short of constructing a moat and drawbridge that could have stopped a McVeigh, and even that would not prevent the type of attacks that we saw on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. The day after September 11, someone set off a smoke bomb in a supposedly secure area of the basement here in the Capitol. This prompted the Governor to consider various Capitol security measures, resulting in talk of everything from updating surveillance equipment to installing metal detectors at the Capitol doors. Of course, no one wants to succumb to a fortress mentality or hide like rabbits in a burrow. In order to demonstrate our refusal to be intimidated, should we ignore reality? In the same way that we don't want to hide like rabbits, we should not act like ostriches with our heads in the sand. As I've already mentioned, our security is not presently trained or equipped to handle emergency situations. They must just observe and report. Colonel Nesbitt of the Nebraska State Patrol has gone on record as saying, without question, the Capitol needs additional security, and we're not doing everything that we can and should to protect visitors to the Capitol. I know that some people on the floor are not