

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

May 21, 2003

LB 608

recognized to close.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Engel, members of the Legislature, I'm sorry Senator Brashear finds it necessary to personalize this in terms of the Program Evaluation Committee. This is good policy. That's why it's being suggested to you. It is not radical in any way. It's what we do with all other agencies of state government, and with most of them, we do them with fewer protections than you do with the Department of Revenue. That's the most protected confidentiality, as it should be. The Congress doesn't audit taxpayer returns? I beg to differ. The GAO does, Senator. How do you hold the executive branch accountable? What is the purpose of performance audits? I mean think about it a minute. Senator Brashear says we hold the executive branch accountable. Well, if that were good enough, if our historical experience had indicated that that was good enough, we wouldn't have any performance audit functions at all, would we? Because all those agencies are under the government...Governor or at least we wouldn't have them for most of the agencies that are under the Governor. We would hold him responsible. But that's what program evaluation is all about. It's the legislative mechanism that holds the executive branch accountable for following the statutes that you and I put in place. And if you have any respect for your own position, you should be in favor of program evaluation as the Congress does, as every state does. Ours is weak, but it's only weak if we are weak. Program evaluation performance audit is a mechanism that all states have to look at the question of whether an agency is following your statutes. And I would think that the more money involved, the more likely you would feel that we ought to from time to time look at a particular program. I repeat, the Program Evaluation Committee in order to do anything has to have the approval of the Speaker and the Chair of the Executive Board and the Chair of the Executive Council. Does that strike you as some sort of radical strike team of some sort? One of those members is advocating a basic amendment today in support of LB 775. There is no chilling effect. Is it a chilling effect to check people's income taxes, to audit people's income taxes? Is that a chilling effect? Is everybody moving out of Nebraska because we occasionally from time to time, once in ten years, or whatever, check income tax returns individually. That's