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

April 28, 2005 LB 645

interested in Senator Raikes' analysis of my comments. I don't think they are entirely accurate, or the analysis was entirely, but nonetheless, that happens. I do want to add emphasis that, as we look across Nebraska, we do have some densely populated urban areas, and some rural areas that are pretty thinly And the Universal Service Fund does provide for subsidies of the rural areas. Like it or not, that's what we have here. And then I want to add emphasis to the fact that, as the critics might say that the subsidies of these independent telephone companies are unnecessary, you know, there are always going to be critics, but I'm impressed with how they leverage those dollars and how far they stretch those dollars, and I want to encourage that because I think that the consumers across rural Nebraska who actually are fortunate enough to live in some of these co-ops or independent areas are fortunate. But I also want to go back in the legislative history just a little bit: LB 827. Then Chair of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, Senator Bromm, worked very hard on LB 827. We passed it on the floor of the Legislature here. And a similar policy was litigated, I believe, out of Missouri, went all the way through the court system. And last year we had the opportunity to recodify LB 827 in the intent of the Legislature, and it was quite interesting to me the opposition of recodifying that just about a year ago. We could have addressed, I think, this issue with that, but if we need to take a little broader approach with Senator Brashear's approach, that's fine, and I appreciate Senator Brashear working on this. But let's compare for a moment what consumers see first or last with their electric bill and their telephone bill, and their telephone bill as a percentage of that bottom line, a pretty hefty portion of that is taxes. Now, power companies, the power districts around Nebraska, have been very good at keeping those fees, with my support in doing so, keeping those fees off of their power bill, off of the power bills across Nebraska. There have been some attempts to add a fee here, add a fee there, to cover various endeavors of public policy. So that needs to be highlighted as well, that what seems to be a high rate for telecommunications is oftentimes or largely a tax, and we shouldn't forget about Now I remain unconvinced that certain, not all, but that. certain public power entities in Nebraska would...I remain unconvinced that they don't want to go into the retail