

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

April 3, 2006

LR 274

former Senator Gerald Conway exercised authority in the executive branch as a professor at Wayne State College, he could not simultaneously serve in the Legislature. In the Murphy case, the court determined that since the Crime Commission made substantive decisions involving, for example, the awarding of grants from public funds, Judge John Murphy could not sit as a voting member. As a result, Article II, Section 1 and these cases must be consulted whenever there is an intersection of interest between the two or all three of the branches of our government. Without questioning the value of the separation of powers generally, I have concluded from my experience in this area that our particular constitutional provision can sometimes be overly strict and impose unnecessary confusion and complexity in certain instances. One such case is that addressed in LR 274CA. Historically, probation administration has always been located in the judicial branch in Nebraska. Clearly, corrections is and has been a function of the executive branch and we have also placed parole administration in that category. We have discussed over the years the issue of merging or restructuring those roles, but there are difficulties in that process that have kept it from coming to fruition. Nevertheless, probation, parole, and corrections have been working together with and through the Community Corrections Council in a very encouraging manner. And I want to highlight the types of programming that the council has been involved in developing. And for purposes of this discussion, I want to point out that the manner in which the separation of powers clause makes such inefficient and overly complex. We have witnessed on the council and unprecedented level of cooperation between the various entities involved in criminal justice. Programs such as drug courts and other specialized courts have provoked the judicial branch to be more involved in the Corrections process. We are now examining use of a reentry court that would extend that trend to prisoners upon release from incarceration, which would entail an additional role for the judiciary. At the same time, the Department of Correctional Services continues to recognize greater need for community-based programming, such as work release. All of these efforts are made more complex by virtue of the separation of powers which imposes strict limits on the extent to which officials of different branches can join forces. It is the intent of