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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 1226

Natural Resources. This bill was kind of brought to us by the natural resource districts and others, thinking that the pool to draw from, from the director, has been narrowed because of the demands that the director is an engineer. It doesn't say what kind of an engineer. He could be a sanitation engineer, an electrical engineer or what, but feeling like today things have changed where that's not necessary. So our bill really says that the director or the deputy director or the professional or the manager of permits and registration division so...still has to have an engineer in the department, but saying the director does not have to be an engineer. The Department of Natural Resources was a merger of two departments in 2001--the Nebraska Department of Water Resources, and the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources did have a requirement that that person was an engineer. In the years past, they were in charge of building the dams and the canals and all that, which we really don't have much more going on of dams and canals, and probably not too many more canals as such in the future. You should never say never, but it doesn't very likely. There was not a requirement for an engineer in the Department of Water Resources...or, the Natural Resources Commission. When the two were merged, that engineer requirement carried on over. The Natural Resources Commission was really established for soil and water conservation, watershed protection, water resources development, flood prevention and control, and statewide resources planning, and also the role has become more toward, now, as a facilitator and a mediator between disputes of water with different states, thinking that there's many, many other qualifications that we need to have in that director other than just being an engineer. And if there was an engineer as the deputy director or in another position there, would be...would be very adequate. The engineers did oppose the bill. We feel like this is the only agency that requires the director to be an engineer. DEQ director does not have to be an engineer, and there's a lot of technical things happening there. Our state engineer, the director of the Department of Roads, does not have to be an engineer. So we're just thinking that it would be much easier to draw from a larger pool and get the best person that we possibly can. If they happen to be an engineer, I think that's going to be a plus. But if they're not, somebody close to them,