

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

April 5, 2006

LB 1226

and I think all of that is extremely helpful. What this amendment does, though, is strike the provision that allows someone other than the director to be an engineer. And this is an argument that reasonable people can be on both sides of, I think, but to me it's just like anything else in this world. To the extent that you can have somebody in charge that has some kind of background or extensive knowledge in the methodology and sciences of engineering, the better off you're going to be in terms of getting good decisions on hydrological studies and all of those kinds of things that are very technical in nature. So one, just because other divisions don't have the requirement for an engineer, I don't think it means that that's not a good idea. I think it is a good idea as long as your selection pool is not so limited that you get a poor quality of candidate. Now I've been around for 20-some years, and during that time, I don't remember who the director was at the Department of Natural Resources in 1979, but I know shortly after that Mike Jess came along. He was an engineer. He was an excellent director. Roger Patterson was an engineer, was an excellent director. We haven't had a problem getting good directors who are engineers. Right now, Ann Bleed is in charge. She's an engineer, and in my opinion, she's an excellent director. Now there's some stuff going around about people not liking Ann Bleed. I don't know what kind of stuff is going around here, but it's kind of ugly stuff, and I've heard it from three different sources. And I don't think that's related to this bill. I'm sure it's completely separate. But she is also a highly qualified and highly effective director who may be more straight shooting than some people may like in a very difficult and tight water situation. Having said that, I hope you all got a copy of the same letter I got from one of the prominent engineering firms in the state, and I'm going to read two or three different parts of this letter to you because I think it states, in summary fashion and in excellent fashion, all of the arguments in favor of having a director who is so trained. The writer says: I have been following reports on the legislation that would eliminate the requirement for the director of Natural Resources to be a licensed engineer, and I encourage you to oppose that matter. I'm sure you are aware of the Omaha World-Herald article that recently opposed this legislation, and of the same opposition from the Professional Engineers Coalition. I am including