

every time we've gone through this I have yet to hear of anybody in Nebraska being harmed by an optometrist being able to use the topical agents that we have allowed for. And this is despite horror stories we kept hearing about. So, as I've heard the horror stories about this particular proposal, I have to wonder if we're crying wolf here or not. I'm sure there will be mistakes. People do make mistakes, but, in my view, having had the previous experience and being told problems would exist and not having problems been identified since then, I just wonder again if they're saying there's going to be problems, there's going to be problems, are there really going to be problems if we allow optometrists to do this? And I, from my experience here, have not seen it and that's one of the reasons again I feel some comfort level with the committee amendment and the desire to proceed with the legislation. So, again, I would support the committee amendment, feeling that we have tightened it up from the original bill and would oppose the Kristensen amendment.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Wesley. Senator Elmer.

SENATOR ELMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members. This has been an item of interest ever since I have been here for seven years, mostly from the issue of the remoteness of health care availability as far as specialties are concerned in our greater Nebraska area. Down in my area, an ophthalmologist is about a hundred miles away. And I feel very comfortable with the optometrists' level of education and their continuing education programs. As far as the implication that the optometrists are going to continue to press for increases in their scope of practice to include all of those involved in by the ophthalmologists, I think, is a little bit far-fetched. After all, the ophthalmologist spends a great deal of his time with removal of cataracts, inserting new lenses and surgical processes. I don't believe any optometrist is ever going to try to enter the area of surgery and administering general anesthetics without going through a medical school program like any other MD would do and to become an ophthalmologist. These types of things that will give better care availability to our rural areas especially is one that I continue to press for. It is one reason I named this bill as my priority bill. And with all respect to Senator Kristensen and his concerns, I think that those concerns are less and of less argumentative...argumentative position than those in being able to more readily, more quickly and more directly being able to