# Legislature delays tenant bill action

The Legislature's Public Health and Welfare Committee Monday heard extensive testimony and then held three bills which would substantially alter the landlord-tenant relationship in Nebraska low-income housing. LB 898 and LB 902, both

introduced by Sen. John DeCamp, provide for the appointment of low income housing tenants to local Housing Authority Commissions. The first measure requires that at least one tenant serve on the commission while the second provides that tenants may serve on the commission without violating the Nebraska self-interest law.

DeCamp, in introducing the bills, said tenant representation would provide a "valuable source of information to the commission while at the same time alleviating the feeling of powerlessness among tenants." He added that meaningful democracy requires it." MAGGIE MALOY of the

Nebraska Community Action

## Oklahoma drops NIT round

NEW YORK-Oklahoma, the Big Eight's lone representative in the NIT, dropped an 88-87 first round decision to Hawaii in double over-time at Madison Square Garden Monday night.

Hawaii's Tom Newell tossed in two free throws late in the second overtime to ice the victory in climax of a come from behind-effort for the Rainbows. The Sooners lead by 17 at-the half before Bob Nash caught fire in the second half to deadlock the score 73-73 at the end of regulation time periods

Neither team was able to crack the zone defense in the first over-time which ended in a 77-77 tie. But Hawaii guard, John Pennbacker sparked a drive that gave the Rainbows an 84-87 lead early in the second over-time period.

The Sooners pulled within one point, but Nash canned a fielder and Newell added his two free throws in the final ten seconds to decide the verdict. Hawaii meets St. Bonaventure Wednesday night. Oklahoma, which finished at 19-8, was

Agency Directors Association, presented state figures which show 54 per cent of Lincoln's low income housing is occupied by students, 30 per cent by elderly citizens and 16 per cent by the poor.

None of these tenant groups are currently represented on the Housing Authority Commission.

Guy Birch, area director for the Department of Housing and Urban Development located in Omaha, told the committee HUD is favoring tenant representation because they feel it will lead to better management. "The responsibility for

appointment is still up to the mayor of the city." he added. "The local people, those most directly affected, should determine who should sit on the policy board

STRONGEST OPPOSTION to the bills came from outstate housing authorities where the overwhelming majority of tenants are elderly people.

Willis Jones of Coleridge told the committee the average age of the tenants in his rural housing authority was 80. None were under 70, he said, and none wanted to serve on a

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#### governing board.

The general testimony of rural housing authority officials centered on what they considered legislation meant for only Omaha and Lincoln. Such legislation, they said, would create more problems than it would solve.

Nevertheless, the bills were opposed by representatives for both the Lincoln and Omaha housing authorities.

CHARLES WRIGHT of the Lincoln board, said he did not oppose the principle of tenant representation on the board, but was against requiring such representation by law.

David Beber, representing the Omaha board, raised the issue of conflict of interest. He called the legislation "a first step, a wedge" and predicted tenant commissioners would be divisive.

The packed hearing room, dominated by housing authority tenants, hooted a statement by K. E. Young, executive director of the Omaha Housing Authority, that "the poor are concerned with their own problems and have no compassion for others," And therefore should not serve on a policy board.

The committee also heard another DeCamp bill, LB 901, which provides for the enforcement of the Nebraska minimum housing codes by the tenants

THE LOCAL housing codes

became law in 1969 when the Legislature passed a bill by Sen. Terry Carpenter requiring every city and village to adopt minimum standards in housing. The law did not provide for state or local enforcement, however.

LB 901 would allow the tenant to bring the housing in which he lives up to the minimum standard and deduct the cost of such repairs from his rent. The bill also provides for a detailed procedure for determining the need for such repairs by a local administrator and gives the landlord 20 days to effect repair.

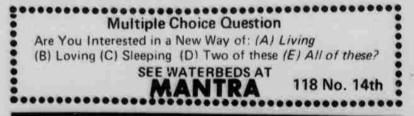
Bruce Hamilton, director of the Lincoln Legal Services Commission, testified in favor of the bill citing state statistics which show 300,000 Nebraskans live in substandard housing and about 20 per cent of all Nebraska housing is

substandard. "LB 901 IS one way to enforce housing codes with a minimum cost to the taxpaper," he said. "The bill simply takes the minimum housing code for the local city and makes it part of the rental lease.

Maloy showed statewide figures on substandard housing which showed Lancaster County leading in most units without plumbing Nearly 2,000 housing units in the county are without plumbing.

Chief opponent of the bill was Otis Glebe, Lincoln landlord and sometime politician, who distributed literature calling for the defeat of the bill and also the repeal of the existing law requiring local minimum housing ordinances

The committee could vote on all three measures Tuesday when it convenes again



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