

By Mark Christensen

State Sen. 44th District

There are eight weeks remaining in the 2013 Legislative Session and several bills have had extended debate on the floor, one being, Legislative Bill 528, introduced by Senator Sara Howard of Omaha.

Roughly two weeks ago LB 528 was advanced on the floor with a 32-3 vote. LB 528 allows expedited partner therapy (EPT) for the treatment of gonorrhea and chlamydia.

EPT is a term used for allowing a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner and a certified nurse midwife, who has diagnosed a sexually-transmitted disease (STD) in a patient, the ability to prescribe, provide, or dispense medications to the patient's partner(s) without an examination of the said partner(s).

The medical professional must also follow the recommendations and guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control.

There are several red flags that I see with this piece of legislation. Senator Bill Kintner introduced an amendment that would have required parental notification of a minor being treated for chlamydia and gonorrhea, but it was defeated. Therefore, the original bill allows for minors to be treated without being seen by a physician.

I am aware that Nebraska law has allowed minors to seek treatment for an STD without involving their parents since 1972. But I find the possibility of a minor being prescribed medication without being examined by a physician, dangerous.

I voted against this bill because I find that it is not good practice and bad policy. There is no guarantee that a partner(s) will get a prescription filled if they are not even responsible enough to be examined by a physician.

This is an epidemic that has been caused by a loss of people's morals. I understand that those suffering from these STDs need to be treated and that prevention of the spread of these diseases is important, but I would like to see this issue addressed in a more ethical manner.

One last concern I have regarding this bill is that it is a replica of a bill that was brought to the floor and voted down 21-24 in 2012.

The vote from last year and the vote from this year shows how the dynamics of the legislative body has changed, in a year's time. As the pro-family issues (that Nebraskans hold sacred) come to the floor, I have gained a perspective of where many of the Freshman Senators stand.

I am learning that issues such as LB 528, are going to be a fight, with this legislative body.

If you have any questions or comments, contact my office using the information below.

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