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Roach told Steidley that the Legislature has reviewed many bills involving boards. Those boards are usually trying to expand their scope of practice. "If your bill passes, it will interfere with existing lawsuits and will allow boards to define their own scope of practice," he said. "Instead of having a single suit, your bill would allow each person to be individually sued, including those in the gallery (referring to audience members comprised of several optometrists).

"The State Medical Licensure Board could do that now," Steidley maintained.

Rep. Don Ross, D-Tulsa, told Steidley that he did not have a problem with boards suing one another. Ross explained there was a much larger problem. "The specific focus is a question of laser surgery," he said. "The driving force to my decision in voting for or against the bill, addresses the qualifications of those who perform this type of procedure."

Rep. Robert Worthen, R-Oklahoma City, told members that if the bill did not pass, any procedure that became unattractive publicly could be stopped by the State Medical Licensure Board. He agreed that there might be individuals who were incompetent in their profession, but said their incompetence would not pertain to the profession as a whole. "Doctor's could be sued over performing an appendectomy," he said. Steidley concluded that there would be a tremendous cost involved for whomever the State Medical Licensure Board decided to sue.

Rep. Dan Ramsey, R-Chickasha, told Steidley that he had read an article in *The Daily Oklahoman* that said the bill would allow barbers to practice surgery.

Rep. Don Weese, R-Broken Arrow, backed the bill and addressed Ramsey's statement. "This Legislature determines the scope of practice," he said. "We decided on rules pertaining to plumbers and barbers earlier this week...have you (members) seen any headlines claiming that optometrists have been negligent?"

Vaughn offered a floor amendment that allows individuals to seek legal recourse if they believe their optometrist is incompetent. The amendment received an approval. The amendment also dates the legislation to not interfere with the current lawsuit by the State Medical Board against the Optometric Association.

Rep. Forrest Claunch, R-Midwest City and Rep. William Paulk, D-Oklahoma City debated in favor of the bill. The lawmakers agreed that there have been no complaints on the qualifications of optometrists. "This has nothing to do with quality and patient care. It has nothing to do with barbers performing surgery," Paulk said. "In fact, there are no statutes currently in Oklahoma's laws that prohibit or permit laser surgery." Both lawmakers concurred the real issue focused on the power of the boards.

Perry debated against the measure. "I am hurt, Rep. Steidley," he said referring to the insinuation that Perry read *The Daily Oklahoman*. "I do not read that paper, I can think for myself." Perry said he believed the measure did not set a good precedent. "There is no urgency here. All this amounts to is organized political clout," he said.

Glover also debated in favor of the bill. "This was discussed in committee," he said. "In fact, Roach presented a bill during that time that would allow all boards to sue one another." Glover explained that supporters of the bill never argued over patient access and that the bill would not authorize nor limit any procedure. "All it does is restore 70 year-old law prior to 1994," he said.

Steidley concluded the debate. "If we do not want a good optometry board, then we should rethink the whole process," he said. "Times have changed. People used to call osteopaths quacks." Steidley gave an analogy to members. "Look at the changes in the pharmaceutical industry." He continued, "Now days, your pharmacist knows more about the medicine you're taking than the doctor who prescribed it." Steidley urged members to vote in favor of his bill. Members voted 83 to 18 in favor of the bill.

"Rudeness is the weak man's imitation of strength."

Eric Hoffer