

SENATOR STONEY: Mr. Speaker, at the onset I would say that Senator Simon and I have collaborated on this particular bill and it's with a great deal of pleasure that I bring it to the Legislature. This particular issue was brought to my attention by one of my constituents, an SIDS parent. The bill itself came about through an interim study that was held last year, LR 15, dealing with the subject of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. This is commonly referred to as crib death. It results in the death of children. It's an unexplained disease. It's unpredictable. It's undeterminable, resulting in the death of children anywhere from the time that they are born until the ages of three years. The hearings that were held were held in Grand Island and also in Omaha. The thrust of the bill is to provide for four things. First, it would provide for an autopsy on all children between the ages of one week and three years that have died. This would be done at the county expense and I would add at this point that this issue has been discussed with the various counties. They do not believe it would be a hardship and therefore, they have no objection. After the autopsy is performed the second provision of this bill would be that the parents or the guardians of this child would be notified within forty-eight hours as to the results of that autopsy. Next if it were determined through pathological findings that this child did indeed die from the cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, that would be listed on the death certificate as the cause of death. The last provision would be that the County Attorney or the County Coroner, after the autopsy were performed, would report to the Bureau of Vital Statistics within forty-eight hours the results of that autopsy so that the Bureau of Vital Statistics could then notify the counseling services or agencies throughout the state that could provide counseling to these parents. That initially is the thrust of LB 605. I would like to add that I was certainly sensitized to this issue when it was brought to my attention. Many of us knew very little about this particular disease but when the hearings were held I think that the members of the Public Health and Welfare Committee without exception were certainly sensitized to this issue and are in full agreement with what is attempting to be done here. Total of number of SIDS deaths in the State of Nebraska in 1976 were sixty-seven. The distribution breakdown is fifteen for Omaha, five in Lincoln or Lancaster County and forty seven throughout the remainder of the state. So the point that I would like to make is it's not just an urban problem, it's a uniform problem in the state and it's one that affects every one of the Senators here and the people that they represent. SIDS results in the deaths of approximately eight thousand to ten thousand children annually. There are approximately one of these deaths in every three hundred and fifty births. As I mentioned earlier, this is a disease that is unpredictable, it's unpreventable. Perhaps with the autopsies being performed on a uniform basis we will one day be able to establish the cause for this traumatic disease. I think one of the points that was made that was very interesting was that the parents in this particular instance, if they have a child that dies of this disease, experiences a great deal of trauma at the time that death takes place for a number of reasons. They have guilt feelings, wondering whether or not through their negligence the child's death may have been brought about. It's important that they know through counseling and have the peace of mind that they themselves had nothing at all to do with this child's death. I should also state