

CLERK: Senator Ashford would move to amend the bill.

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Ashford.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Ashford has AM1124. I understand he wants to withdraw that.

SPEAKER BAACK: It is withdrawn.

CLERK: Senator Ashford would move to amend with AM1409. (Ashford amendment appears on pages 1489-91 of the Legislative Journal.)

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Ashford.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. This is LB 629 which is the Parenting Act and as you may recall on General File there was some debate and some good debate about the issue of mediation and whether it should be required or not required in the mediation process. And there was also some discussion about whether or not the court was required to formulate a parenting plan in all cases and it set forth certain criteria in the bill as to what that parenting plan would or would not include. At that point there was...I had some discussion with Senator Kristensen and I've had a few discussions with Senator Chambers about the bill and the amendments that are before you, amendments to 629, are in effect the accomplishment of the two main issues. One is to make absolutely certain that mediation is voluntary only, that it is not required. The court cannot require mediation, number one, and, number two, that a parenting plan would be within the discretion of the court. Thirdly, the bill sets forth some language concerning, another part of this amendment sets forth the language, some language concerning the separate juvenile court system. In Douglas County and Lancaster County and Sarpy County we have separate juvenile courts. The amendment makes a change in the existing law as it relates to the separate juvenile court system which allows the district court in difficult custody cases or in any custody case to waive the jurisdiction, its jurisdiction to the custody issues involving children to the juvenile court. This is a change in current law and as much as the way the law exists now the separate juvenile court may decline to take a custody case if it is...even if it has the jurisdiction to do so, it may decline to take a domestic relations case if it so desires in its discretion. So this