

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

February 3, 1999 LB 40

individuals on bills which might be particularly sticky. This was such a bill. It cannot be called anything other than a law and order bill, a law enforcement bill, a bill that gives the prosecutors another stick to beat unfortunate people with. By raising these punishments in the statute it will give them a tool to coerce people into making plea agreements. But more than one bill is going to be dealt with during this session of the Legislature. And one thing which is crucial, in my opinion, is that a person honor his or her agreement or word. I had agreed that, if Senator Brashear would accept certain concessions, I would not go all out to stop this bill, that I would not even put forth what would be for me a spirited protest against the bill. I'm not going to vote for it because it goes contrary to my philosophy of crimes and punishments. I don't believe that punishments should be enhanced simply to accommodate prosecutors. They have in their position more untrammelled discretion than any elected or appointed official in this country. They have more than the president, because the president cannot charge anybody with a crime. They have more than a court, because the court is not going to convict somebody of a harsher punish...crime than is charged. So the prosecutor is the key. The prosecutor can either be vindictive, vicious, and without principle, as the current Attorney General is, in my opinion. The prosecutor, on the other hand, can be so mealy-mouthed and do nothing because he or she is totally incompetent, which is not desirable. Or the prosecutor can apprehend himself or herself as being the attorney for the sovereign, and recognize that because of that position...

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: One minute.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...there is a very high standard of conduct required, a level of integrity which is demanded. And these things are not often found in a prosecutor. But that doesn't mean we don't hope for such things. Regardless of the fact that prosecutors may abuse what Senator Brashear is going to be able to persuade you all to give these prosecutors, I'm not going to wage an all-out battle against this bill. This is not one of those pieces of legislation, in my opinion. So, Senator Brashear, oh I'm going to have to put my light on. My time is out.