

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

February 22, 1999 LB 356

important. I don't think anything has driven home the need for this legislation more than what happened a week ago this weekend when we all picked up the paper on Sunday morning and read about the fatalities of three individuals near Blair, Nebraska, in a very tragic accident. Once again, as I looked at the bottom of the article describing the accident and fatalities, it was pointed out that no seat belts were in use. A law enforcement official, who was on the scene of that accident, made the statement afterwards that there was a very strong chance that at least two of the three individuals who were deceased in that accident could have survived if they would have been wearing seat belts. I think statistically we have information now that very clearly highlights why this legislation is necessary and I'd like to go over a few of those, a few of those highlights for you. Evidence shows us that failure to buckle up contributes to more fatalities than any other single traffic safety-related behavior; that buckling up reduces the risk of injury and death by 50 percent, 50 percent. If you look out at the traffic fatalities in Nebraska last year that were somewhere over 300 deaths, equate that with safety belt use and think in terms not of numbers but in terms of 150 people whose lives possibly could have been spared by wearing safety belts. Less than one out of four traffic fatality victims in Nebraska, less than one out of four, were wearing their safety belts. A thing that was tremendously alarming to me is the statistic that shows that when the driver is unbuckled, restraint use for children in that same vehicle is 24 percent. Less than a fourth of those children are restrained when the driver of the automobile is not. Medical costs: I hear about individual rights all the time in arguing against this piece of legislation and, in the past, any type of legislation that mandates use of seat belts, but medical costs that are borne by all of us in society, medical costs of an unbelted victim is 55 percent more compared to belted individuals. And let's not forget that 16 percent of all medical bills are paid for by public funds. In Iowa, studies showed that unbelted crash victims average a hospital stay of 17 days, compared to 7 days for those who are belted. And 67 percent of "nonbelt" users that were surveyed said they definitely would buckle up if a violation resulted in the loss of license points, and this, after all, is what we're attempting to do. By making this a primary offense, by assessing a fine and levying points against the license, we want to increase