

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

April 13, 1999 LB 505

Mr. President. (AM0793, Legislative Journal page 968.)

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Landis, you're recognized to open on LB 505.

SENATOR LANDIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature. Later this week or early next week, we will debate the death penalty. I think Senator Chambers and Senator Beutler and I were the only ones here the last time the Legislature debated the death penalty, in 1979, to the best of my recollection. It was as focused, as knowledgeable, as thoughtful, as grave and solemn a debate as I can recall in the Legislature. Everyone understood the absolute gravity of the issue. And this body sat in its seats and paid complete attention, for hours at a time, as we debated the death penalty. My guess is that we will rise to that standard again, later this week or next week, when we contemplate taking the lives of the handful of people that are on death row today, or may be on death row in the future. You will understand that we're talking about life and death, and we will act accordingly. We will give that issue the serious attention and focus that it requires. And today, on this bill, we will take a look at an issue of life and death that isn't a handful of individuals, isn't hundreds of individuals, but is thousands of individuals. Those individuals particularly are the young. What I want to focus on today is the fact that the bill that you have before you, to the best of my ability, to make as scientific or as studied or as evidence-supported conclusion as I can, will lengthen the lives of existing Nebraska children, who are yet teenagers or younger, to the tune of between and 4 and 5,000 kids, 4 and 5,000 kids. I think it deserves our best attention, our best focus, as the death penalty would, if we were talking about a death penalty for 5,000 children. This is on the order of the mass grave that has been uncovered in Kosovo, where the number of bodies was 7,000, and filled our television screens and filled our national press. And I'm asking you to devote the same amount of time and attention to 5,000 Nebraska kids, now alive, whose lives will be lengthened if LB 505 passes. Now that's the central issue for debate, isn't it, whether or not 5,000...4,000 to 5,000 teenagers and younger kids will have their lives lengthened by the passing of this bill. There's some dispute on that fact. I get it in the letters that you get, the e-mails that you get, I