

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

February 23, 2001 LB 154

will be very brief in my opening because the amendments will become the bill. The Ombudsman had been getting many complaints from inmates, I had been getting many complaints, Senator Dwite Pedersen and others of you, based on inappropriate, inadequate medical treatment. So the Ombudsman's Office did a very thorough, detailed inquiry, interviewing employees, inmates and others. A report was produced which rubbed some people in Corrections the wrong way, meaning that they were dissatisfied and upset about some things contained in the report. The Governor, based on the publicity that was swirling around this report and the issues raised therein, appointed a task force. I will not give the names of all of the people, but they were highly respected in the community, from the medical area there was a former Chief Justice and people of that caliber so that whatever report they produced it would have an air of credibility which would allow the public to feel confident that a serious effort had been undertaken. To the surprise of some, but not to others, the findings of the task force, to a great extent, mirrored the findings made by the Ombudsman's Office. There were numerous recommendations made based on those findings as to how inmate medical care could be improved. I worked with the Ombudsman to craft some legislation; this was introduced. If you want to look on your gadget, you can see the people who testified in favor of the bill. One thing I will tell you even before we get to the committee amendments is that the original bill would have created a medical authority which was in a sense another layer of bureaucracy, just to be very blunt and not try to prettify anything. Some of what it was supposed to do, is already being done in some instances, is prepared to be done in others, and that authority would have been housed in HHS, I believe. There was a complexity, an overlapping and perhaps, being quite frank, the unnecessary creation of another layer of bureaucracy, so I readily agreed to strip that from the bill. But before I go into much more about the form that the bill will take with the committee amendments, I will let that serve as my opening and introduction and first step toward compiling a record for this bill.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Chambers. You've heard the opening on the advancement of LB 154. Senator Brashear, as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, you're recognized to open