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LB 273

opening on LB 273. Senator Dierks, as Chairman of Ag Committee, you're recognized to open on the committee amendments to that bill.

SENATOR DIERKS: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Legislature, the committee amendments to LB 273 strike the original provisions and become the bill. However, the amendments retain the core provisions of LB 273 as introduced, and these are carried forward as Sections 2 through 5 of the committee amendments. These sections provide for licensure of individuals to the Department of Agriculture for the commercial production and possession of industrial hemp. Requirements for licensure are not changed by the amendment. Requirements include identification of the applicant and the site where the industrial hemp will be grown and a criminal background check. Licensees would have the duty of documenting that seeds planted are certified industrial hemp seed, that the crop is grown according to the contracts, and to document the sale and distribution of the plants when harvested. The substantive changes in the committee amendments include addition of a new Section 1 to provide for a definition of industrial hemp to mean, quote, all parts and varieties of the plant *cannabis sativa* containing 1 percent or less concentration of tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, by dry weight. The definition in the committee amendment more accurately describes industrial hemp in terms of THC concentration. The utilization of the 1 percent THC concentration standard is consistent with that adopted by other states, and accommodates different varieties of industrial hemp that vary in THC content up to 1 percent. It also accounts for the fact that the THC content may vary from year to year due to growing conditions or as the plant dries. One percent THC content is still well below the THC content of farrow marijuana, or ditch weed, which is 4 to 5 percent THC, and that of high grade marijuana of 12 to 15 percent THC. The weight of the evidence presented to us in committee suggests that even at 1 percent THC it would not be possible to inhale or ingest industrial hemp quickly enough to obtain the hallucinogenic effect of the marijuana. New Section 6 added by the committee amendments provides that no person shall use a license for possession of industrial hemp as an affirmative defense against prosecution for marijuana possession unless in