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FLOOR DEBATE

March 13, 2002 LB 293, 1073

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Aguilar, you're recognized to open on your amendment.

SENATOR AGUILAR: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the body, the amendment, in essence, is LB 293 as amended by the Transportation Committee. But, I guess first of all, I'd like to thank Senator Thompson for bringing her bill, LB 1073 forward, and for allowing me to amend onto it. This is designed to save the lives of a few children, and save the quality of life for others. Each year children and adults, riding in the cargo area of a truck, or even on the hood of a car, are injured or killed. This amendment is an effort to reduce the number of persons under the age of 18 involved in this type of accident. A recent letter to the editor in the Omaha World-Herald told the story of a young child riding in the cargo area of his dad's pickup. Another driver ran a red light and hit the truck. The boy was thrown out of the truck and then ran over by the truck his father was driving. The boy died at the scene, cradled in his father's arms. Even though his father may have been driving carefully, he was not careful enough with his most precious cargo, his elementary-age son. Alegent Health wrote me, in favor of LB 293, now AM3082, saying they often see people in the emergency room who have been injured from riding in the portion of this vehicle. That is not designed for passengers. An emergency room nurse wrote me with stories of injuries and thanking me for introducing the bill. The Tri-City SAFE KIDS organization was the impetus for this bill. They do an excellent job of educating parents about the proper use of child safety seats and other types of restraints. They support this wholeheartedly. This amendment, if it becomes law, will not apply to people in parades, or young people who may be in the back of a truck, in order to do their job. It also will not apply to a vehicle that has added seats and restraints to the cargo area as long as they meet or exceed federal safety standards. If a violation of this nature occurs, an officer can ticket the driver. The fine for this offense is a minimal \$50. Educational efforts by SAFE KIDS have reduced the number of passengers riding inappropriately. But statistics still show that more than half of the reported injuries and deaths from people traveling in the back of the trucks or on the hood of the car are children. When I move a fine piece of furniture in the