

May 15, 1979

LB 260

Would they stand up and be recognized? Stand up. Good morning and welcome to the Legislature. The Chair now recognizes Senator Merz.

SENATOR MERZ: Mr. Vice...Lt. Governor, I'll call you... Vice-president, and Senators, I'm a little disturbed here this morning. I think that Senator Murphy has been misinformed on a few points. I have worked long and hard since 204 has been implemented, and to start a new program such as 204 takes a lot of crawling before you can walk. Things like this just don't happen over night, and I have spent a lot of hours with Dr. Ford and other people, and traveled a great deal over the state in my involvement here in trying to correct some of the problems. I know there are other agencies that don't want this agency. They want to do it on their own. The mental health people, for instance, and traffic safety, and all, are involved here, and I had a resolution up last year to correct some of this, but it seems like the Public Health last summer didn't think it necessary so these hearings were never carried out to try to coordinate the effort between the different agencies. This has been a problem I know, but something just two years in operation and then whambo, let's put a kill to it. This don't seem quite fair. Is anybody as concerned? I always pick on the universities. But is anybody concerned that they're carrying out their obligation to the students to a hundred percent? That costs us money too. This money is coming from those that have a problem with alcohol. They're paying their own support money through the tax on alcoholic beverages. Even the beverage companies are not opposed to this bill. They are fully aware of our alcohol problem in the state, and they're willing and ready to carry on the program. I wonder why we have to pick on things that...this concerns us all. This problem... right now we have, over half of our accidents on the highway are because of alcohol. We ain't going to cure them all, but if we could cure twenty percent we would save in one year over twenty lives. This isn't large, but it's still a lot better than having it skyrocket. If you've visited as many detox centers as I have and seen the people there I think you would have an altogether different attitude. I wish some of you would at least spend one-half a day at the detox center and see what's going on. These people are in dire need of help, and here's something that we need the worst way. If we're going to whack it off in two years it seems disgraceful, and I hope you don't vote to kill this bill.