

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, LB 5 proposes a constitutional amendment. It is a proposal to allow the people to vote on the requirement that now exists in the Nebraska Constitution which says that the Legislature will have Final Reading. Reading at large is the constitutional language and it means simply, as you all are well aware by now, that each bill regardless of its length on Final Reading has to be read from the beginning to the end and we know that Patrick has done a superb job of doing that up to the present time. So the bill in short eliminates from the Constitution the requirement that we have Final Reading but it does say, and this particular provision makes it different from bills similar to this that have come before the Legislature in the past, it does say that any member of the Legislature, any one member of the Legislature, may request that a bill be read at large before the vote is taken upon its final passage and the bill shall be so read. So in other words, there would be no Final Reading at large but any one member of the Legislature could request it and then we would revert to our present system. There will be passed out to you, hopefully before too long here, shortly, a set of documents, four different sheets, I think most of you have received it already. Okay, the first page is merely a letter from the Clerk of the Legislature indicating that from his experience Final Reading has taken approximately twenty-five to thirty percent of our time. As you all know, it takes more and more time as we get deeper into the session. Now those of you who have had long experience here can make your own judgments about how much time that it takes but I did want to get that information out to the new members of the Legislature who may appreciate the judgment. But really in a sense, time is our gold in here and we have to spend it wisely and my main point is simply this. That block of twenty-five to thirty percent of our time spent on Final Reading is to a large extent wasted. Now it is true that from time to time it may be helpful to one or two members of the Legislature to have a little more time to read the bill. It is true that maybe once in two or three years a mistake is caught but what is also true is that year in and year out we don't spend enough time on bills on General File and Select File, and every second year, the short session, the second year, the one second year that I have been here and from talking to other people it has been true historically, there are large numbers of bills that die on the floor of the Legislature without any hearing whatsoever. Those number in the hundreds. In addition to that, as you are also well aware, dozens and dozens of bills receive abbreviated debate. Last year, for example, you may recall that on a number of big bills, we had, I think it was, fifteen minutes debate on