

March 11, 1982

LB 870

one out of ten drivers is legally drunk, yet only one out of two thousand drunk drivers is caught. I think it is interesting to note that more Americans died on the highways in one year than lost their lives in Vietnam, and many of these deaths will be avoidable if we can keep those individuals who are intoxicated from behind the wheels of automobiles. 250,000 Americans were killed in alcohol related auto crashes in the 1970s. This means that 70 Americans lose their lives daily due to drunk driving accidents. Some people are concerned as well with the economic or the monetary impact that it has on our nation. The drinking driver problem creates an estimated economic cost of over \$5 billion annually. Each single fatality on our nation's highways constitutes an economic loss of approximately \$150,000 per each accident; and for Americans under age 35, and we have a few members in the body that would qualify, this is the number one cause of death, it is motor vehicle accidents. One out of every two Americans will be involved in an alcohol related auto crash in his or her lifetime. Now of a 135 fatal accidents involving a drinking driver in Nebraska in 1980, only two of the drivers went to trial, and in both cases, the juries found the drivers innocent. In 85 of the 134 accidents, which is 63%, the drinking driver was killed, and in 7 of the 85 accidents, another driver or a passenger also was killed, but typically no other car was involved. Now you have read a great deal in the news media, you have heard a great deal on the media of radio and seen on television that the State of California just this year passed a comprehensive law to deal with this particular issue. There have been a number of editorials that have appeared. I won't take the time to refer to those but would say that LB 870 encompasses the principles which are incorporated in the new law in California. Now they had a reduction in automobile deaths the first weekend that this bill was in place in the State of California. Their deaths dropped from 47 to 27 which was the lowest in 20 years in the State of California, and the reasons given for this is that this new law was in place and, additionally, there are people in our nation who are becoming concerned, who are forming groups to address this serious societal problem. Two of those groups are Mothers Against Drunk Drivers and Remove Intoxicated Drivers, the MADD group and the RID group. Now they feel that with the impact of these two groups in going to Legislatures such as ours and expressing their concerns, as well as laws being passed such as this, they are beginning to address the problem. I received a copy of two items that I would like to refer to just briefly that appeared in newspapers here in the State of Nebraska that I think address some of the questions that will come about on this particular subject. One of the items comes from the Chief

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