

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, without even going into the issue of how serious the problem is that is created by the easy acquisition of these dangerous weapons, I am looking at what we are dealing with today when we talk about germaneness issues. Ever since I have been down here, my view has been that the definition of germaneness handed down by the State Supreme Court should govern us in determining what is germane. By having an extremely narrow ruling or view of the question puts us in the position of having the ruling based on what the issue is. If there is an issue that the members feel must be brought before the body, then they will overrule the Chair. They will suspend the rule which indicates that they don't believe that the Speaker's interpretation of germaneness is valid, that it is valid and will be supported on the issues that the body does not want but, on the matter of germaneness as such, the body will depart from what the Speaker rules. It should not be a question, when we are legislating, I know it is a tactic, but it should not be a question of what the issue is or who is trying to offer an amendment. If the amendment is not liked, vote it down, but if you see how this bill starts, it says, "An act relating to crimes and punishments;" crimes and punishments; and you can write any crime, any punishment that pertains to anything in the Criminal Code in this bill as an amendment, and the State Supreme Court will not strike it down as being not germane or containing more than one subject. What we are doing here is restricting our ability as a Legislature, and some people like that. There are fewer things to deal with. It creates what they call efficiency, which means you get a whole lot of votes on a whole lot of things one way or the other, regardless of the validity of the vote or the quality of the legislation that is produced. I believe that Senator Ashford's amendment is germane. Crack is not cocaine. You are amending Chapter 28 and Chapter 29 in this bill already but, since you are dealing with crimes and punishments, you can do that and there is no problem with germaneness. I believe that this amendment is as germane to the bill as the utilization of automatic and semiautomatic weapons is germane to the problem of drug dealing. People may not want to have to talk about what the Legislature's position on ownership, possession, or whatever of guns is to be. To avoid that, I don't think it ought to be done behind the shield of saying that the offered amendment is germane. The Speaker, I can understand, because he is something like a facilitator, wanting a narrow ruling because there are fewer things that can