

will hurt their health. We...some of us have introduced a bill that would suspend the driver's license of our young people, but, as I understand it, that is still being held in committee and so I feel that we need to start some place. We need to tell the people that we mean business when we enact these tougher penalties for using drugs and for dealing in drugs, and so I would urge you, at this time, to vote against the kill motion on this bill.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Ashford, followed by Senator Abboud. Senator Abboud.

SENATOR ABOUD: Mr. President, colleagues, I just have a couple comments and then I'll be seated and we can probably move on to a vote on this. The bill was aimed, when we...when the bill was formulated there were a number of different approaches that we could have gone with and I felt very strongly that the bill should be aimed at the individuals that are profiting from drugs. I felt that the users of them, it's rather unfortunate, it's very unfortunate, and it was my hope though that the individuals that are using these drugs will stop. And one way to get them to stop is by shutting off the supply of these drugs coming into their community. It was my intent with the bill when it was focusing just on the individuals that were selling it, the individuals that were profiting from it and you have individuals that are selling these drugs, trafficking in cocaine and crack that don't actually use them and to them it's strictly a business proposition. There is millions of dollars to be made in the sale of these two illicit...of cocaine and crack and as a business proposition I think this should be one of the hazards of doing business. Hazard is that if you're convicted the first time, if you're white, if you're black, no matter who you are, no matter what type of an attorney you get, if you're convicted, you're going to do some time in prison. And I think that that approach, though it may seem a bit harsh, is the only real approach that will help to slow this down. Now we can increase the penalties to these people, put them in life sentence. I know the State of Texas has some incredibly harsh penalties, up to 99 years in prison for these types of offenses, but that really wasn't my aim. I think people can change, but I think that, unfortunately, sometimes the state has to help out these people to change and, hopefully, by having these types of mandatory minimum where they know that if they're convicted they will go to prison, it will help to discourage some of these people from coming into our state and selling drugs here or