

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Yes. Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, the amount of the punishment being proposed by Senator Abboud, I think, as he pointed out, is moderate so I'm not attacking that. I'm attacking the need for the bill because under present law and the sentencing structure, the range of years that can be given, that can be achieved now. The problem that I see is using this to give the appearance that something has been done by the Legislature that is going to impact on drug trafficking and it will not serve that purpose. People will tend to sit back and say we've done something. The Legislature does have an obligation and if I thought the Legislature were serious, I'd make proposals. In our community, which is victimized more than any other one right now, we had talked to black officers to set up a task force that would deal with drugs and youth gangs and the youth violence. Chief Wadman nixed the idea and said there is no problem, infuriating the community and put many of us who are considered spokespersons or leaders in a position of saying, we won't work with such a man anymore. You had a community, that usually is at odds with the police, wanting to set up a task force and work with them. These men know the families, they know the youngsters and they know the difference between a grouping of young people who are there as a group and those who are a gang. There have always been groupings. The big difference now is the amount of money and the heavy weaponry that is available and these weapons are being put in the hands of young people who don't have the money to afford them. They don't get them from other youngsters who have the money to afford them. If it comes from one youngster to another, you trace it back to an adult and usually somebody outside the community and I don't mean as far away as California in all instances. We have wrestled with this problem, we have tried to work with the mayor, we have tried to work with the chief of police and nothing is done. A man who runs an apartment complex called me just yesterday or the day before because he had called the chief and the safety director about drug deals at his place and when he calls the police take from 45 minutes to an hour to get there, then nothing is done. They'll drive a few blocks away and park in a beauty shop and that's where they spend their time and this is what is ravaging the community and the Legislature thinks it's a rational response to say, put a three-year minimum sentence in one instance and a five-year minimum in the other. If you're not making the arrests, there will be no trial; with no trial there is no conviction. When people are arrested and charged there