

SENATOR WESELY: So what I am asking for is consideration for taking some time on this issue and for considering a more comprehensive approach. Everybody has said that this is not the solution, it won't solve the problem, and I think they're right. No one answer is there. But if this has provoked, as I think it has, the idea that we need to deal with the drug problem in Nebraska, and we do, perhaps the solution is at hand with this health education concept as one solution, yet there are many others out there that if we would only sit down together and talk about it, perhaps we can reach some consensus on. So I would rise in support of the Schmit amendment, giving us a couple of weeks to talk about this. I do not oppose the bill at this point. I think there is some merit in dealing with the penalty issue but certainly isolated it is inadequate and we do need to take the time to fully address the issue and I would be willing to work with different parties on finding a solution.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Abboud, followed by Senators Chambers, Langford and Pirsch.

SENATOR ABBOUD: Mr. President and colleagues, I rise in opposition to the bracket motion. I don't think holding onto this bill for a couple of extra weeks would serve any purpose. You know, it's interesting listening to the different theories on how to deal with the drug problem. Senator Chambers has raised some very valid concerns in regards to law enforcement in the Omaha area. He talks about problems that he has had with law enforcement there. And I'm not here to say that law enforcement is perfect, I know at the beginning of the year the City of Omaha increased the department's current strength by 5 percent, which resulted in an increase of about \$775,000 that it would use towards increasing law enforcement numbers. About 630 officers are currently...or will currently be a part of the Omaha police force. So we are getting financial commitment from different cities in regards to increasing the amount of law enforcement that is available. Now I would like to really turn to the argument that's been raised by everyone, really, that's been in opposition to the bill and I would like to characterize them as one particular theory and that theory is called the "ostrich theory", that if we put our head in the sand, that the problem will go away. If we put our head in the sand then we won't have to worry about adding more new prisons. If we put our head in the sand, we won't have to worry about hiring any law enforcement individuals. If we put our head in the sand,