

SPEAKER BARRETT: Time.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...I offer in all seriousness.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. The Chair has just received a startling bit of information. It so happens that today is the birthday of our own John Weihing, Gering/Scottsbluff. Happy birthday, Senator Weihing. Discussion of the Chambers amendment? Senator Conway, followed by Senators Hall and Schmit.

SENATOR CONWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise, naturally, in opposition to Senator Chambers amendment which would really do nothing more than to legalize the drug activity in the State of Nebraska, but must say that I'm glad that he raised the issue, so that we can put into the record that in no way was this bill, from the very beginning, or any way throughout any of its activities, hearings, proceedings and discussions and the like ever directed towards that particular end. The criminalization of drug use and the situation as we know it, under the provisions of the legislation that I bring before you, has not changed, does not change, does not change attitude, does nothing more than try to, through the profiteers and the drug industry, to get them to help pay some of the social costs that we're paying from other means as we are taxing legal activities, and much of that tax dollar is now being dedicated towards law enforcement and many of the social ills. The social ills, as we know them, are becoming more evident. The continuation of going on through everything, from the health care costs of the crack babies and the sad state of affairs that many people are on who are tied up into the drug industry, we have a great deal of cost that is being dedicated. Hopefully, through this particular activity, it will do two things. One, it will extract, from those who are profiteering, some of those funds for the purpose of paying for some of those costs; and also I think there is a legitimate economic basis to consider, and that being that between the criminal side of the statutory base that we're living under now, as well as under the civil penalty, that would help pay those costs, the very cost of drug traffic... "trafficking" would be in a situation where it may be beyond the scope of the ability to find it profitable to operate in a state such as Nebraska. The density of the population is not here, the drug wars, the gang wars that we hear going on in Omaha are for territorial rights. At some point when the cost is there and it's not as profitable as it