

overcrowding is a forgotten issue in this body and we're going to learn more about prison overcrowding as the days come and as penalties increase and one of the frustrations that you and I both have sitting on the Judiciary Committee is, we have a lot of people come in with a lot more penalties, all very good causes. We're going to punish people harder, we're going to scare them away from using drugs. Just a few short years ago we had about 6 percent of the people coming in for drug offenses and now it's well over 30 percent of those people coming into the penitentiary are for drug offenses and the fiscal note on like LB 794 was over a million dollars just when you increase the minimum penalties on a few of these and that scares me. It scares me a lot because that is money that would go for higher education, that's money that would go for other programs of education dealing with our youth, dealing with a lot of other people that isn't a very popular thing to do with prisons. A conference I just got back from said one of the major problems in the prison overcrowding is they get tough people, which we all want to be, I don't know of anybody that wants to be soft on drug dealers, but that that has a very severe cost to it and so, I guess, I would ask, and similar to Senator Moore, that we look at what those costs are because in our efforts to be tough and our efforts to be helpful to our youth, in effect, what we are doing is creating a problem on the back end and that is the prison overcrowding problem that we may well be faced with putting caps on our prisons, letting people out early, being forced to build additional prisons and so on. Those are things I don't necessarily want to do. And although I think that the bill is going to move and probably has very, very good purposes, I just want to alert the body and it's a discussion that we've got to face at one time or another and it's one that nobody wants to go back home and say, gee, I'm soft on crime. There is nobody here that wants to be soft on crime. At the same time, there is nobody here that wants to raise the sales and income taxes to build more prisons and it's a choice that we're going to have to make some day...

PRESIDENT MOUL: One minute.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: ...and it's just at this point that I don't think we ought to let the bill pass without that point being pointed out or that discussion. And the prison overcrowding is real. I would have people look at the fiscal note of LB 794 which is similar and it just adds a couple of...well, I think it's about 17 months per inmate and that 17 months per inmate on