

which is to make it punitive toward the young people whose interest are supposed to be served. There have been attempts to pass laws to criminalize the conduct of adults and I have opposed some of those bills. I feel very protective towards young people. They have no concept of what the Legislature is doing to them for what would seem to me to be political reasons. There are stores, service stations, all types of retail outlets of various products which also sell tobacco products, which readily sell these things to children and the police and nobody else is interested in enforcing the law against those purveyors of these products. So since they cannot be or will not be regulated and controlled, the thing to do in the minds of at least the majority of the legislators is to create a new class of victims, not only victims of those who might give them the tobacco product, but victims of the state, which will make them criminals for having it in their possession. If a parent sends a child to get cigarettes, the child becomes the criminal, and do you know the only way the child can avoid being convicted of a misdemeanor, give evidence for the conviction of his or her parents, or grandparents, and since ministers smoke, maybe a minister sent the child to the store. Not everybody is aware that it would be a crime to make a child possess tobacco, sending them to the store. I don't understand the purpose of this amendment. I don't think any rationale that could be offered would make me support it, but I am going to listen and maybe I can be brought to a realization of why it was offered and why a majority voted to adopt it. This is aimed against our children. We don't need to make more of them criminals. If we took every young person below the age of 18 who would be found in possession of a tobacco product and convict that youngster of a misdemeanor and create that many more criminals in society, all that will do is raise the crime statistics, but it certainly is not going to do anything to benefit the youngster. It is not going to improve the level of morality or obedience to the law in society at large. The problem is with the tobacco industry selling a product which, by its very nature, is detrimental to the health of those who use it. Rather than deal forthrightly with that issue, we are going to go off on a tangent and victimize young people. Remember, they don't have to intend to possess this tobacco product, they don't have to know they are possessing it, and they will be guilty of a misdemeanor, if they are in possession of it under any circumstances. I hope you will vote in favor of this reconsideration motion because I don't think society will be harmed one bit by the striking of this amendment from LB 577.