

based not on the safety considerations that I think should be the real debate here, but the carrot and the stick that are being offered to us by the federal government.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. Senator Rasmussen, you are next.

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the body. I rise in strong support of this legislation. Although the carrot of the money at the federal level is a consideration, it really isn't the basis of my strong support for this legislation. We have heard some talk about the fact that this legislation was passed once before and went to the voters and they repealed it, so why are we doing this again? I think it is important to recognize that that was an exceptionally close vote. I think the difference, margin of difference was only about 1,000 votes. I think it is also important to remember that it was coupled with the repeal effort on the school consolidation and that there does tend to be a tendency to just vote a no on everything that is on the ballot. We will find out about that again I guess in the spring, but I think it is time to reexamine the use, the mandatory use of seat belts. And, Senator Wickersham, you wondered about why people say they would favor mandatory seat belts but we still have a low usage of them. I remember when it was passed before, I was one of these people that didn't use it, but when you said it was the law I used it. And after using it for six months, it became a habit, and I think if for no other reason, there are a lot of people out there that if you say it is the law, they will buckle up. It just simply reminds them to do that, and they will begin to use it when they didn't use it before, and that it will eventually become a habit. There are those who would say that there are still those people who die even though they wear a seat belt, and certainly that is true. But when you look at the total picture, the vast majority of the fatalities are persons who did not have a seat belt on. Other people have talked about the cost, and I think that we have to recognize that when we are talking about this issue, it isn't just an individual decision because we are sharing in the cost, and it is my understanding that they are three times greater for those who do not wear seat belt restraints in terms of hospitalization and insurance costs, and those are frequently costs that are shifted to the rest of us and that we help pay for those. And I think we also have to consider the amount of money that goes into workmen's comp and disability, the retraining and hiring of people who are off work