

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Ashford.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. It is frustrating to have a priority bill that does not come up for a Select File debate on the final day or the last few days of a session. It's probably even more frustrating to have a priority bill come up for debate with time to debate it but with the knowledge that you know that that bill is going to be debated to the end of the time that the Speaker has allotted for Select File debate and you know that there are very significant pieces of legislation behind it that would not have that debate. And I know in looking at the General File or the Select File agenda that there are some very significant pieces of legislation. I know LB 1059 and many others that are important to be resolved this year. If I run LB 728, I know in discussing this matter with Senator Chambers that it is his intention to debate this bill until the 6:30 limit, Senator Chambers, of time that is available to debate this bill. And I want to, before I withdraw it, with the realization that it will not come to a vote, I'm very saddened by that. I think Senator Landis worked very hard with me and I appreciate his help in putting together a bill, a mediation bill for...in the area of custody cases which is really a significant piece of legislation. It is an area that I have been very concerned about since I came into the Legislature and introduced legislation for a family court. I felt very strongly that this was a way of taking those issues, especially those issues dealing with children, getting them out as much as possible of the courtroom setting and getting them into a process whereby children could be adequately protected and could be cared for and concerned about. And I felt that this mediation bill was a significant step to that end. And it's a bill I know my staff has worked on very, very hard, Senator Chizek, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and his staff has worked on, Voices for Children has worked very hard on it, a constituent of mine, Roxanne Hoberman and her husband, Ken Hoberman, have worked very, very hard on this bill. It's a piece of legislation that has been before this body for two years, it's worthy of passage, it should be passed, it should go to Final Reading and it should be passed on Final Reading. I appreciate Senator Rasmussen for her cosponsoring of this bill and Senator Will as well for helping me to get this bill to this stage. It was a very, very serious effort and I think with a very laudable goal. But I am very, very aware that if I were to debate this bill beyond this statement that we would not get to some worthy measures that can pass and can move onto Final