

CLERK: Madam President, Senator Bernard-Stevens would move to bracket the bill until June 2nd, 1995.

SENATOR CROSBY: Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Madam President and members of the body. I am very serious on this amendment or this motion, and I am not trying to kill the bill. In fact, I'm trying to do the opposite of that. I am trying to keep the bill so it is still a viable option, and yet...well, let me get into the whole concept of where I am coming from. I've worked in this area and other areas with the Department of Social Services, the court system, and Senator Day has done a tremendous job of working in this area as well. Where we find...the position we find ourselves in today is that there is a tremendous concern about the visitation. And, again, one of the comments I was going to make is there are so many fathers who have come up to me over the last two years and said to me personally that they were refusing to pay their child support, and it is because they could not get the visitation rights honored; they could not see their children. And they were going to be darned if they were going to continue to pay if they couldn't see their children like the agreement stated they were supposed to, even if they had to go to jail. The visitation right is very, very important to those noncustodial parents, as important as the child collection on the child support payments. What we have now is the bill that has separated the two issues to a large degree, and I suspect that we are going to have a difficult time ever getting to a vote on the bill. If, in fact, we get to a vote, and if for some reason the bill would actually make it through Select File and Final Reading, then what you have is the agreement that we are going to come back and look at the visitation side. But I am here to tell you that, in my judgment, the Department of Social Services will find a lot of reasons why they won't be able to make the visitation thing work. You are going to get one side of the coin, but you are not going to be able to get the other side of the coin at all. The best way to get these types of things agreed to is for us, in the body, to say timeout. Yeah, there is a bill. The issue is important. We want to get those that don't pay child support, we want to get those support payments to be made. We want visitation rights and it is our prerogative to say timeout. Senator Lindsay, Senator Day, the Department of Social Services, the Governor's office, whomever was involved, take some more