

February 5, 1996 LE 754

background checks to be performed to have access to the national system of individuals who are applying for certification that have not been in the state for over five years. If it's less than five years, this will give us the ability and someone who's also coming in outside the state. We think that's needed obviously because it's difficult to do background checks and to access this information on individuals who are coming into Nebraska to teach. I think it's good public policy certainly to have a high standard of confidence for those who teach our children. I, personally, believe that this enhances the already high standard of professionalism that our public educators have in this state, and would urge all to support the committee amendments and LE 754. Thank you very much.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Hilgert. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Madam President, members of the body. I also will be approaching the bill from my heart. And where Senator Bohlke commented that she, intellectually, I think, she thinks it's a good bill and I understand that. Sometimes I fall under that mode of thought myself. But my heart just can't go along with it, and so I'm going to speaking and voting from my heart today, not necessarily from any great source of wisdom, and I'll be the first to admit that. Senator Hilgert's a young senator, he's come into the game early and took on this as an important issue this summer. As he went to a press conference he was invited to, commented he would take it as a priority bill and kind of walked into the storm a little bit. Senator Hilgert, if you could just respond to a couple of questions concerning the committee amendments, I'd appreciate your response here.

SENATOR HILGERT: I'd certainly try.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Senator Hilgert, if the committee amendments were adopted, about how long would it be before most teachers in the state would be...have a criminal background check?

SENATOR CROSBY: Senator Hilgert.

SENATOR HILGERT: Okay, for most teachers? I don't have the numbers for you. And certainly it would take some time to...