

February 26, 1996 LB 1248

SENATOR CHAMBERS. Madam President, and members of the Legislature, I'm going to mention again some of the problems that I still have with the bill, but I'm unable to draft amendments at this time to address these issues because I want to kill the bill, but I have a bit of hesitancy and I want it to be clear in the record why. Senator Vrtiska has laid out a problem that exists in Richardson County. Even I have not stated that the problem, as he laid it out, does not exist. We're not even arguing about the existence of the problem. My argument and my reason for opposing the bill is that there are certain policies and approaches taken by county officials in Richardson County which led to the financial straits they find themselves facing at this time. Since I am unalterably, unwaveringly opposed to the death penalty under any and all circumstances, I am not sympathetic to a county being able to come in here and get state assistance because their problem is partially created by seeking the death of a human being at the hands of the state. I cannot vote to underwrite a perpetuation of barbarism. I view the death penalty as the worst thing ever to befall humankind. Let me give you something to consider under your thinking cap. We pass laws, most of them over my strenuous opposition and my prostrate, analogously speaking, body to strengthen sentences, to lengthen sentences, to be as harsh as possible. The argument is made that society is in danger. We cannot pass a single bill that will prevent a single robbery, murder, rape, or theft simply by enactment of the bill. There is only one killing that we can prevent by enacting a law. The one killing we can stop by enacting a law we will not stop. What killing is it that we can stop by enacting a law? The killing done by the state. If we are serious about ending killing, let the state stop the killing where the state has the power to stop the killing. But as with so many things, it's easier to talk in abstract terms and for political purposes about those we're seeking to achieve. Let the state set the example. If we believe that young men and women should not be killing each other, if we think that youngsters, like the 14-year-old girl who is facing assault charges in juvenile court in Lancaster County for having shot her brother in the forehead with her grandma's pistol and killed him, if we want to show that we're serious about trying to level out society when it comes to the amount of violence that we face, we are leading...

PRESIDENT ROBAK: One minute.