

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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February 11, 1999 LB 152

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. For opening on LB 152, Senator Thompson, you're recognized.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Mr. President, members of the body, thank you. I would like to first point out that the committee amendment will be the bill and there should be a copy in front of you with a short explanation of what this does and so, if you're following along, the committee amendment will be the main part of what we'll be talking about. It's slightly different from the bill. The purpose of LB 152 is to encourage good school attendance for all children, particularly children under age seven. Current compulsory school attendance law in Nebraska is ages seven to sixteen, but most people enroll their children in school younger than that in kindergarten and first grade. But some children under the age seven have very poor attendance records. Schools work with them, but, because the compulsory school attendance law doesn't require them to be there every day until age seven, this bill is proposed to give school districts, school teachers, administrators and people who work with these families, an additional tool. And what our policy statement would be is to say that children who attend public schools in Nebraska under age seven should be in school every day and subject to the same attendance rules that children over age seven are. Just to review with you what the compulsory school attendance law does, it requires every school district to have a policy on school attendance and this policy would be the same then for children under age seven, who are enrolled in school, as children over age seven. And what that does is say that after an excessive number of absences, certain steps would be taken, and I think these are...steps are very important for young children because we want to encourage them to be in school every day. And these steps allow the school district to attempt to solve the truancy problem through educational counseling, through educational evaluations, through referrals to appropriate community agencies for services that the family may need. The compulsory school attendance law does also allow for people who continue to not address these problems to be referred to the county attorney's office. But hopefully this law would first get the attention of parents, set clear rules on attendance, and encourage good school attendance. And why is this so important? Children, when they come to school and have