

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

February 22, 1999 LB 356

understand the seriousness of the problems that I try to present. That brings me to a consideration of Senator Byars' bill. The National Urban League, which is perceived as a black organization, it at least purports to work in the interest of black people, was going to support President Clinton's national initiative to make seat belt violations primary offenses in the way that Senator Byars is doing. When they heard from the NAACP, civil rights lawyers, and organizations from throughout the country about the harassment that is perpetrated against black people under the pretense of enforcing this so-called seat belt law, the Urban League not only withdrew its support but expressed opposition. Contacts between the police and black people, especially black males and even more especially young black males, has a tendency to result in violence and even death against the young black male. I am not going to stand quietly by or sit on my hands while this Legislature creates another opportunity for my people to suffer depredations at the hands of the police, and I intend to fight this bill in every way under the rules that I can. Senator Byars did share with me, in advance, a publication called, Status Report, Volume 34, Number 1, for January 16th, 1999, and the headline is "Black and Hispanic Children and Teens at High Risk of Dying in Motor Vehicle Crashes". There is a subhead line: "Findings of a New Study Could have Major Policy Implications". The article talks about the John Hopkins...Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and they were suggesting...not suggesting, they were declaring that failure to wear seat belts has contributed to much higher death rates among Hispanic and black youngsters. When I read this, I talked to Senator Byars and I mentioned to him that after reading it, I didn't see any reference to the condition of the vehicle or vehicles involved in the accidents, nothing about the nature of the accident, what caused it, the extent of injuries that could have resulted whether a person was in a seat belt or not, the number in a vehicle, the actual cause of death. Some people are decapitated. Some people will have their head impaled. Some die from fire, some from suffocation. So, for those who are trying to push for mandatory seat belt laws and making them a primary offense, to suddenly decide that they're so interested in the welfare of black people and Hispanics seems, at best, cynical. I don't see people on this floor bringing up that issue unless they're trying to persuade me to vote against a woman's right to carry abortions to term,