

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

February 24, 1999 LB 356

wrote letters to the Department of Motor Vehicles and got that changed. It is now on there, so they're getting more clearer statistics. You read the newspapers, if there is a fatality accident, if they are not wearing seat belts, every time that they are not, it is publicized, and it is publicized wholeheartedly. If they are wearing them, there may be a little caption or there may be nothing. Thank you.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Time. Senator Byars.

SENATOR BYARS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Senator Schmitt and Senator Chambers. Your opinions obviously are valued, although I disagree with them quite heartily. I'd like to go back to the issue that Senator Chambers has raised relative to the fear of civil liberties, which, in effect, is what he's talking about, the violation of those civil liberties or the opportunities for some law enforcement individuals to violate those civil liberties when they are given the opportunity. And I don't want to disagree with Senator Chambers because we've all seen instances of this happening, and it's abhorrent. It is absolutely abhorrent. I could not agree with Senator Chambers any more that if law enforcement officials use this as an opportunity to harass young black males, Latinos, any young people, any people of any race, any origin, I think it's wrong. And I honestly think the incidents of this has to be looked at and I think this is up to our law enforcement management, our chiefs, to be able to instruct, educate the members of their police forces, their sheriff's departments, state patrol, that this will not in any way be tolerated. But it doesn't alleviate the fact that if we increase seat belt usage that we're going to reduce deaths. And I think that has to be our paramount concern. I feel, my heart bleeds, I don't want these abuses to happen, but we have to save lives. In Douglas County, in the period from 1993 through 1997, there were 139 traffic fatalities. Of that 139 traffic fatalities, and, Senator Schmitt, this is a documented piece, only 36 of those individuals were wearing safety restraints. That's dominant. That's convincing. That's reason for us supporting this legislation. I find, and I made the point in debate with Senator Chambers, as we've started on Monday, that there are people, as he, in the black community that are opposed because they are afraid of harassment. But in states where changes have