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LB 126

because I don't think we're going to stop completely, but to slow the underage drinking. I think that's a very serious question, it's an issue that's very, very serious. First of all, currently under our law, it's illegal for anyone under 21 to possess or consume alcohol. And even though it is currently illegal, it just doesn't seem to stop it. Alcohol is involved in the four leading causes of teenage death. Those are traffic crashes, homicides, suicides, and drownings. It's also associated with many other high-risk activities by young people. Earlier this year, there was an UNL student that was badly injured when she fell from the third floor of her fraternity. Every year we hear the tragic stories of the high school students who are bad...who are either killed or badly injured because of someone drinking. The Department of Health, in their recent surveys, showed that alcohol consumption was involved in 28 percent of all teenage fatal car accidents in 1997. Seventy percent of Nebraska's seventh and eighth graders, and 80 percent of the ninth and twelfth graders had consumed alcohol in this state. Forty-nine percent of Nebraska senior high school students had ridden in a car with someone who had been drinking. The national average is only 33 percent. Currently, Nebraska has a higher percentage of youth that drink and drive than the national average. A survey of the college students showed that 9 out of 10 had used alcohol by the age of 17. Between 1990 and 1996, alcohol was involved in 26 teenage fatalities in Douglas and Sarpy County alone. UNL reports that alcohol was a factor in 90 percent of all violent incidents that was reported to the campus police. Nationwide, and this will shock many people, junior and senior high school students consume 35 percent of all wine coolers sold in the U.S.; 35 percent of all wine coolers are consumed by junior and senior high school students. Those same junior and senior high school students will drink 1.1 billion cans of beer annually; 1.1 billion cans of beer annually are consumed by high school students in this country. So I think that you can see that as you look at what I passed out of what the other surrounding states are doing, that it's time for Nebraska also to come in and say we need to do something for this state. We need to stop the teenage drinking. LB 126 deals with two parts of the underage drinking problem. It increases penalties for the minor in possession. It also increases penalties for retail liquor licensees who repeatedly sell to minors. This is intended to make retailers more careful