

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

January 24, 2000 LB 509

his amendment to the amendment is that this bill, if passed, would have no retroactive effect. He and Senator Chambers are citing cases which were decided before the people of this state adopted the equal protection of the laws amendment, and that changes the whole face of the issue. This bill would have, in practical effect, a retroactive effect. It would overrule the decision of the courts and our Supreme Court in six cases where execution has been ordered, and it would reverse those six orders. Now, as a practical matter, if you look at his amendment that says, in effect, and it's on page 383 of the Journal, it says in the underlined portion, subsection (1) of this section does not apply to criminal proceedings in which a sentence of death has been imposed. In other words, the amendment on its surface says it would have no retroactive effect. Obviously, in these six cases where six criminals have been sentenced to be executed, you would have six appeals, and in those appeals those criminals would say it is totally unfair to execute us under prior law when the Legislature has changed the law under which we would not be executed, we'd merely get life imprisonment without parole. No court, in the light of the fact that our citizens have adopted the equal protection of the laws clause, no court...our court would not, I can guarantee you...I can't really guarantee you but it's certainly my considered opinion that our court would not draw a line and say, execute these six but from here on we're going to change the rule and we're not going to execute. That would be the height of irresponsibility. And so I feel that this amendment is a sham. It is portraying to you that there would be no retroactive effect, when I think any competent, experienced trial attorney you'd talk who has had experience before the Supreme Court in criminal cases would say, our court would have to be fair. Our court would have to follow the equal protection of the laws clause which we put in our constitution long after the case that Senator Chambers refers to and that Senator Brashear refers to. So I oppose this amendment because it will not work as it says it would work. One other issue that's been addressed here that I want to address also, and that's this concept of life imprisonment without parole. Now one of the strengths of this case, according to Senator Chambers, is that it would impose life without parole. We don't have that in Nebraska. As a matter of fact, it isn't possible under our constitution because our constitution establishes a Board of