

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

February 2, 2000 LB 510

SENATOR CROSBY: I hope a lot of you will, too. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Crosby. Senator Beutler, on advancement.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, I guess I would like to speak in favor of the bill. I think probably where we come down on this all depends on what our concept of the job of Attorney General is. And I would argue with you that the place where you should give the most thought to being partisan are those places in our government where the job is clearly a policymaking job. We, as legislators, make policy. There is a strong argument we should be partisan because our philosophy matters. Where we are, philosophically, matters a lot. But I would argue with regards to the Attorney General that that is not and should not be a policymaking decision, policymaking position. Up until recent times, I don't mean just this...this particular Attorney General, but this is something that's happened in modern times with respect to Governors, with respect to Attorney Generals, with respect to all the state officers, is that they begin to see themselves rather as executive branch officers executing the law, they begin to see themselves as policymakers, actually taking away and trying to influence the behavior of the Legislature in terms of what the policy, what the law should be. Now if you believe that that's the proper role of those officers, then you should probably vote that they should be partisan. But I would argue with you quite strenuously, especially with regard to the Attorney General, that the function of the office is to be the attorney for the state, and that when you run for that office, you have to make the decision, you should be making the decision that your personal philosophy, whatever it may be, to the extent that you can possibly do it, should be submerged, should be negated. You should try to ignore your own personal philosophy and apply the law. You're not the maker of the law, you're the applier of the law, of the law that exists. You're the interpreter of the law that exists. You are interpreting that law for all of the state agencies, for the Governor, and for everybody, whose duty it is for you to give an objective opinion of the law. To the extent that you become high-profile philosophically in advocating law, the effect of that on the whole system, whether it's true or not, is to cause everybody to