

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

February 7, 2000 LB 74

SENATOR ENGEL: Right. Well, I would like to have you continue for a t, moment, would you please? Then I'd like to respond.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Yes. The Rules of the Road have the purpose of creating uniformity of traffic regulations throughout the state, and the Department of Roads has a manual about three or four inches thick put out by the federal Department of Transportation, and I purchased one of them. And the Department of Roads does everything it can when it comes to traffic signals, all these other things to comply so that there is uniformity throughout the country. The specific statement in the Nebraska Rules of the Road is that uniformity is what is being sought. It is not allowed under the law of Nebraska as it exists now for the Legislature to tell a political subdivision that they can define an infraction differently from the way the state has done it, or the way the Nebraska Supreme Court has done it. So whether it's the Nebraska Supreme...Legislature saying it's a civil offense, that is not allowed by the Nebraska Supreme Court. The Nebraska Legislature cannot do indirectly what it cannot do directly; it cannot empower a political subdivision to declare an infraction to be a civil matter. It can put that in the law, but it doesn't mean anything. The Legislature tried to circumvent the requirement of the Nebraska Constitution that all fines go to the schools. It passed a law carving out certain areas where that would not be the case. And the Nebraska Supreme Court said the Legislature cannot amend the constitution; despite enacting a law that allowed that, it's beyond the Legislature's power, so it was struck down. So, if I haven't answered your question, you can put it to me again. But I think what you asked me is, can the Legislature, and, if I'm getting it wrong, correct me, can the Legislature authorize a political subdivision to declare what is an infraction to be a civil offense? Is that what you asked me?

SENATOR ENGEL: That's basically, yes.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: No, they...the Legislature can pass a bill like that, but it would be unconstitutional on its face. The only way something like that could be done is for the Legislature to completely rewrite the Rules of the Road, completely rewrite the Rules of the Road. There is no other way it could do anything like that, because Nebraska has chosen to