

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

February 14, 2000 LB 950

the members of the Health Committee, Senator Jensen and myself, are very mindful of your interest in this issue and it definitely will get a priority in our attention process. I just want to reiterate a couple of things that I think are important to remember before we vote on...before we advance LB 950. I want to reiterate that the newborn hearing screening is a very simple, noninvasive test for congenital hearing loss. It's conducted in the hospital before newborns are discharged to go home. The Hospital Association, the Academy of Pediatrics, the EMTs, the Medical Association, the hearing and language people are all in agreement that this needs to be done and are in support of the legislation. Why do we want to do it? Because there are definite benefits. Studies have shown us that the identification of hearing loss by six months of age followed by appropriate intervention is the most effective strategy for normal development of language in deaf and hard-of-hearing infants and toddlers, and this can be accomplished only through universal newborn hearing screening. I emphasize to you again, all of those tests, the statutorily required tests for newborns, screening tests in the state of Nebraska now, significant bilateral hearing loss occurs more frequently than all of them combined. This tells me that this needs to be a priority. This Legislature has always, always found the resources, particularly when we're talking about a small amount such as this, just right over \$200,000, and I think that's high, I really honestly think it's high, but this Legislature has always found the dollars, even through the toughest of times, to be able to fund these issues. Do we have to be mindful of how we spend our dollars? Absolutely. I've always worked closely with Senator Wehrbein, worked with him in compromising, worked with him in trying to find ways that we can fund these significant issues, but not to turn our back on them, to let the individuals that we represent in this state know that we care, that we're concerned and that we'll take action when it's necessary, and we think that's very appropriate in this particular case. I would ask you to advance LB 950, the Newborn Hearing Act, to Select File.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Byars. The question before the body is, shall LB 950 be advanced to E & R Initial? All those in favor vote aye, opposed nay. We are voting on the advancement of LB 950 to E & R Initial. Have you all voted who care to? Record, please, Mr. Clerk.