

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

March 15, 2000 LB 1407

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...submitting an amendment does not mean it's going to be adopted, but I'm trying to make clear that I do not intend to just be critical. I'm going to have something to offer as what I think is a rational and appropriate alternative to what is before us now. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Chambers. Those wishing to speak are Senators Jensen, Crosby, Bohlke, and Schimek. Senator Jensen, on the Beutler amendment.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I think we need to think a little bit about how we got where we are today here; what happened. We passed a Welfare-to-Work reform bill in this Legislature several years ago, and part of that process we set into statute a program to take people who were on welfare, train them, find jobs for them, get them back on the work rolls; and certainly I don't think there's too many people that want to live off of welfare. So in my opinion I think we have allowed them freedom, freedom to have a job, freedom to work and freedom to...to provide for themselves. In 1998...and, by the way, that statute, of course, became law. In January of 1998, there was an administrative decision that was made that we should completely eliminate the 24-month requirement and include everyone up to 185 percent of the poverty level. So somebody in administration really overrode the law, overrode the statute that we set into place. This simply brings that back in into line. I would hope that this administration and the people over at HHS do not make administrative decisions that override what our statutes say. Then I think we also need to think a little bit about that 185 percent of poverty, that's \$31,528, somewhere in there, and what is the role of government. Are we to...to provide child support for all citizens or at least a large share of them? And think a little bit about that number, 185 percent, and how many of our staff receive \$31,000 or more, and how many of our staff have children and are paying their own child support. So there is a fairness issue here and that fairness issue is for those families who are struggling, who are working hard and providing their own child support, their own day care, their own...taking