

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

January 29, 2003 LB 122

concerned about 15,000 children being taken off of and deprived of Medicaid, then you wouldn't hear this from me. But the concern is for the fetus, but not for the child, not for the mother, not for the mother-to-be. But I have to be concerned about that, because I don't have one of these religious agendas, or one of these political party agendas, where I say the thing that sounds good, but when time comes to apply it to walking, living, breathing, struggling human beings, I turn my head and look the other way. But what do many of my colleagues say? Not only do they say it; they want the poor to say what the leper was required to shout when those who were not sick and afflicted came near, unclean, unclean. They forced a human being to describe himself or herself as an unclean thing, not a person. And all of this that we do ties into what I'm talking about. You say, well, it's just a park fee; you're overstating, you're overreacting, you're exaggerating. Well, I'm the one who sees those pebbles being dropped into the basket, the weight of which ultimately will crush down the people who cannot help themselves, who cannot speak for themselves, who get no consideration when they approach those in positions of power, who are viewed with contempt, the ones who are the jetsam and flotsam of this society. You know what Abraham Lincoln said, among other things? God must have really loved poor people, because he made so many of them. That may be true. Maybe God made people poor. And maybe God intends people to be poor. I don't accept that notion, that I can take solace from the fact that poor people are here and I did not make them poor. My job is to try to alleviate suffering wherever I can. And as a member of the Legislature, I have the opportunity to do it, or at least make the effort. All of these little irritants, all of these little annoyances...because that's all they are to those who are well off, in this Chamber, who can talk about going to a show...they're more than mere irritants and annoyances to those who are poor. This is what lets me know people on this floor don't know what being poor means. You know what being poor means to some of them? You can't buy something that...is there some guy named Lauren who makes expensive clothes? Ralph Lauren. Lauren. All right. If they can't buy that, then they're poor. If they've got to get what Nixon referred to as Pat's good Republican cloth coat instead of a fur coat, they're poor. If they have to wait an extra half-hour before they can