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FLOOR DEBATE

April 8, 2003 LB 513
 LR 66

propose to sign and do sign LR 66. I see no further lights on. Senator Redfield, you're recognized to close on your amendment.

SENATOR REDFIELD: Thank you, Senator Bromm. I will tell you that my child had meningitis as an infant. So actually, my amendment wouldn't prevent that. Senator Bourne is absolutely right, this can occur earlier in life, but parents do take their children to see physicians. We have pediatricians who do inform parents about the healthcare of their children. They tell them all about the immunizations that they should receive, and they also recommend those that are optional. So those information pieces are occurring at younger ages. What we're talking about here is a program under Senator Byars' bill which addresses a problem that was recognized by CDC, and that was the higher incidence level for college freshmen in dorms. That was the genesis of the bill. The vaccine is effective for three to five years. Because of the incidence level that we have experienced in Nebraska, if we were to have those students receive the immunization, say, as a junior, they would be protected through that high school career and into their college career, so that it wouldn't be a waste, it would be more effective. If I were a parent making that decision, why would I wait until college if the incidence rate in Nebraska has occurred at the high school level, where they are mixing up in sports and other activities with young people? It seems to me if I can get three to five years' good out of the vaccine, I want them to receive it earlier. How are parents going to know that? Well, perhaps a vaccine was developed...since their children were young and under a pediatrician's care, the vaccine was developed, and parents are not aware of it. That's what, actually, this amendment would do. It would come and inform parents, like me, who have experience with meningitis but did not know when their child was young that in the future a vaccine would be developed. Now the vaccine is there. It's available. I think it would be helpful, if we're going to do this, to inform parents. Does it change Senator Chambers'? No. You still have to make a decision on the Chambers amendment, whether this is the direction you want to go with the bill, and actually take out Senator Byars' language. But if you're going to do the Chambers amendment, it makes sense to have these children protected earlier. And certainly the information would be easier to