

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

April 29, 2003

LB 407

Thompson, on AM1111.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. When I heard Senator Brashear talking earlier today, it reminded me of an analysis that was written on corporate downsizing, and the lessons to be learned if you were to transfer that to government. And I read this many years ago, but it always stuck with me, because the lesson learned was that you can't...you have to get rid of the work. If you're going to downsize, you can't expect employees to do double the work, because it just isn't going to happen. You're going to have your key people quit. You're going to not get things done that you need to get done. And the lesson to government is eliminate the work. We haven't done anything, as to my knowledge, that eliminates any of the work for our state employees. The laws are still on the books, and they still are expected to protect the environment, protect children and elderly people. They're expected to investigate fires. They're expected to ensure quality health. We have not taken any of the responsibilities off the book. So what we have is a situation where you hear people, as Senator Schimek said, say, well, tighten your belt. Well, in economic times like we are facing, there are greater demands on government. And we heard that in the hearings. When the economy turns south, there's a higher need for mental illness counseling for stresses that manifest themselves in increasing mental illness and need for counseling in communities to hold families together during these difficult times. We also know that we're going to have more people out of work, and they're going to run out of money. And those children are going...and their families, are going to need some assistance to get them through the hard times. And we as a government have made that commitment. We haven't said, if you're poor we're not going to help you out through this difficult time. That's still on the books. So the work hasn't changed. So how do we get to cutting budgets, and how do we get back to the discussion that you need to be telling people of why that belt-tightening concept just doesn't work? And I want to go back to the four things that the Council of State Legislatures found in their study of the states and the problems that we're in. One of those was changing demographics. And here's what's happening to the demographics of our state. We have more young people and more old people in