

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

May 6, 2003

LB 283

They need more treatment in those facilities, and that's just one piece of our system. We formed, as a Legislature, a substance abuse treatment task force in the criminal justice system about three or four years ago. Senator Hilgert, who is not longer here, and Senator Dwite Pedersen and I served on that, and Dwite Pedersen and I served on a similar group prior to it being legislated by all of us, because we know we have to get a handle on these costs. We know we have lots of people in the system, and so we need to do two things, and Senator Jensen's bill gives us the first opportunity, since I've been here, to substantially get a reasonable amount of money to first keep people from coming into the system, and second, to get treatment before they come back to our communities, and that is very important. The findings of the substance abuse treatment in the criminal justice system task force, and this was a group of people from across the state. They were appointed by congressional district. They...we were staffed by the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Department of Criminal Justice. These are our findings: There is a connection between substance abuse and crime. Treatment is needed to ensure public safety and public health. Treatment of addiction is as successful as the treatment of other chronic illnesses, and that's one of the myths that's out there. But treatment works. We also know that treatment works as effectively for the incarcerated as it does for the general public. It works just as effectively...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR THOMPSON: ...for the incarcerated as the general public. Twenty-five to 40 percent of adult arrestees, and 65 to 85 percent of incarcerated adult offenders need substance abuse treatment. Thirty to 40 percent of juvenile arrestees, and 65 to 80 percent of juvenile offenders need substance abuse treatment. If we don't get to the causes of the problem, our budgets are going to continue to explode and you're going to have problems in the community that we are never going to get to that impact other governmental subdivisions that are also paying the bill. This is our opportunity this session to do something to turn the ship. We can't sit in our committees again next year and see the rising costs of our criminal justice system. Senator Brashear and his task force...