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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 303

to Sturgis, South Dakota to a motorcycle rally and drive 200 miles out of the way not to wear a helmet. And if we, here in Nebraska, repeal the helmet law, other riders will not know the circumstances, and so not only will we have riders within the state losing their lives, we're going to have riders from out of state losing their lives also. I would certainly urge the body to adopt the Byars amendment, and then I would also urge the body to vote no on LB 303. Thank you, Mr. Spe...President.

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Senator Jensen. The next speak is Senator Thompson on the Byars amendment, AM1365 to the Smith LB 303. Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. President. I want to just present some more information on why helmet use is so important. And if we're going to pass this bill, we need to pass Senator Byars amendment in order to ensure compliance. This information is from the Institute for Highway Safety...or the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. And what it says is without a helmet law, only about 50 percent of motorcyclists wear helmets. Helmet use is now 100 percent when a law requiring all motorcyclists to wear helmets is implemented, and we need to keep this law strong by having it a primary offense, as Senator Byars is suggesting. Why do we encourage people to wear helmets? Helmets decrease the severity of injury, the likelihood of death, the overall cost of medical care. They are designed to cushion and protect riders' heads from the impact of a crash. Just like safety belts in cars, helmets can't provide total protection against head injury or death but they do reduce the incidence of both. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that helmets reduce the risk of death in a crash by 29 percent, and the risk of fatal head injury by 40 percent. They are even more effective in preventing brain injuries. And as Senator Jensen and others have pointed out, this is part of the reason that we want to make sure that our laws are strong and that we can prevent injuries. On the secondary issue of how do motorcycle helmet laws impact health care costs, the same study cites a number of studies on this issue. It says, unhelmeted riders have higher health care costs as a result of their crash injuries and many lack health