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LB 270

SENATOR FOLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Senator Beutler, for the time. Senator Brashear, there has been an effort in Congress over quite a number of years, as I understand it, to also deal with this question of hate crimes and I would imagine virtually every state legislature throughout the country has probably dealt with this question. I don't know. But I'm wondering how our statute relates to the federal statute. Have you looked at that question at all?

SPEAKER BROMM: Senator Brashear, would you yield to that question, please?

SENATOR BRASHEAR: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will. Senator Foley, I have no immediate recollection. There are 38 states that have hate crime statutes.

SENATOR FOLEY: Yeah, I thought there probably was a large number. And I could be mistaken on this, but I think that the efforts of Senator Kennedy in the U.S. Senate have been frustrated in terms of trying to enact a federal hate crimes statute. I may be wrong on that. I'm just kind of tossing that out and I didn't know if you'd...the course of your study of this issue, did you come across that at all? No. No.

SENATOR BRASHEAR: I have no knowledge of what they've done.

SENATOR FOLEY: Okay. That's fair enough. I'd have to explore that further myself. I thought what I might do is just read from Senator Chambers' speech of 1997, because I think it kind of gets to the concern that I'm raising today, although Senator Chambers says that his views are changed, and that's fair enough. This is what Senator Chambers...I'll just read a bit of one of his floor speeches. He says: I'm not a mind reader. I don't believe in punishing anybody for what they think. You all know that if I were to punish people for how they think about me, everybody on the floor of the Legislature would be stone cold dead right now. But your thoughts are your thoughts, and you have the right to think what you want to. Whatever your thoughts are, you have a right to entertain them, and bad thoughts carry their own punishment for the one who entertains