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March 10, 2004 LB 1005

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Vrtiska. Senator Chambers, on the Foley amendment to LB 1005.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I am not unsympathetic toward what Senator Foley is doing. There was a gentleman who had a little candy shop, and he was known as Bill to everybody who was aware of him, and he was legally blind. There is a young lady who does handle the vending area on the first floor. And I've contributed several times to various efforts being put forth where they were fund-raising. But when we are going to create statutorily a preference to help those who, because of a handicap or disability, may have difficulty procuring employment, I'm wondering if, in this manner, we ought to carve out such an exemption, to the exclusion of every other disability. If a person is wheelchair-bound, I'm sure there's a tremendous limitation on such person when it comes to employment. If this were a bill, we would have plenty of time to discuss and debate it. But by it being offered as an amendment, there is not the opportunity to go into it thoroughly. I cannot even say for sure how I feel about the amendment. I know I want to be fair. But if there are similarly situated people, it's difficult for me to say that one group which is disadvantaged ought to be given sole and exclusive consideration by the Legislature. And by saying sole and exclusive, that means by definition all others are left out of the picture. I do not believe Senator Foley is unsympathetic or uncaring toward or about any other group. And maybe I'm the only one these things occur to. But when they do occur to me, and we are establishing a statewide policy by way of legislation, I cannot avoid speaking or refrain from speaking my mind on the subject. Suppose we adopt this, and somebody else who has a severe physical disability would approach us and say, what about me? What about people like me? You're not going to give us that opportunity? And they might have looked at the law and have seen that to get this preference they would have to provide the service or services on a competitive basis, I believe. Because Senator Foley said, if all other things are equal among those who are bidding, the preference is extended to those who are legally blind. Let me ask Senator Foley a question. I want to be sure that I'm stating correctly what the amendment does. Senator Foley, does it say blind, or legally