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February 4, 2005 LB 37

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Schimek, to open on advancement of LB 37.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. President and members. I could open by saying this is a simple bill, and actually it is a simple bill in that it is...only has three very simple provisions in it; however, I don't think this is going to be a simple bill in terms of conversation. This bill is about the Hall of Fame Commission, which is something that we established in statute a long time ago and have done some updating to those statutes over the years. In 1996, I believe it was, then Senator Don Wesely introduced a bill because he was concerned that we were inducting far too many people into the Hall of Fame; that the Hall of Fame should be reserved for those very distinct and definite leaders in our state. And we made some changes in the bill then. We...I remember one of the things we did is we changed the length of time under which someone could be considered to the Hall...for the Hall of Fame after their deaths would be 35 years. Now, that bill originally said 50 years, and that's one of the provision in this, in this bill, that I want to alert you to. But I became concerned about the process again, after the flap over the Hall of Fame nominees last fall, and actually sat down with the Historical Society, which houses the Hall of Fame or staffs the Hall of Fame, and talked with them about it. And the result of those conversations was that we came up with a bill that had three recommendations. First of all, we thought that the Governor should be required to consider gender and ethnic diversity and appreciation from...for Nebraska history and culture when making an appointment to the Hall of Fame Commission. And without even looking at who the present commissioners are, and they meet some of these criteria, we thought that that was something that should definitely always be considered, and I do understand that there are people on the society right now...or the Hall of Fame right now who do have backgrounds in history and do have knowledge of the state. The second provision is that the Nebraska Hall of Fame would hold...would hold public hearings when doing the Hall of Fame selection. Right now, to the best of my knowledge, it's usually one hearing and then a selection. And in the discussions we felt that it should be a five-year period to consider, to take those nominations, and then to have