

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

February 8, 2005 LB 53

restored, because he did not meet the standards established in 29-112. The corollary is, had he met those standards, the statute would have entitled him to have his right to vote restored. So it is not exclusively in the hands of the Pardons Board, and we should not put it there. The Pardons Board has not been willing to restore the right to vote. As a matter of fact, it has been draconian in handling practically every case and type of case that has come before it. When people look at the disproportionate impact of criminal convictions and sentences on black people, other nonwhite people, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, they want to say that's because they commit more crimes. A commission was established by the Supreme Court of Nebraska, the State Bar Association, to look at disparities in sentencing, but even going backward, the charging, the trying, the handling of jurors, jury lists, and all of the things that go into making up the criminal justice system. And at every point along the way, discrimination against nonwhite people can be found. The court said it wants to find out why these disparities exist. So although,...

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: One minute.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...looking at the facts and the numbers, you can see what amounts to discrimination, the court wants to pin it down specifically. It is clear in Douglas County that black people are charged with felonies for committing an act which, if the same act was committed by a white person, may not be a felony. If a black person and a white person are convicted of the same basic offense, the black person will tend to get a much stiffer sentence. So the discrimination is in the system that is being used to deprive black people of the right to vote, and other nonwhite people. But as Senator Schimek pointed out, it goes beyond in its reach to the nonwhite groups. Veterans and others are included, too. Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Thank you. Senator Dwite Pedersen.

SENATOR DW. PEDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. So often we want to punish people. And the punishment in itself isn't always a punishment. I have been privileged, most of my life, to work with people who have been