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February 8, 2005 LB 53

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Senator Wehrbein, you're recognized.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I just simply want to add my support to this amendment and to the bill. I probably was somewhat neutral going into the hearing, having not given it a lot of thought over the time, although I did recognize that felons couldn't vote. But I think they made a good case. If you really believe that when you end your parole and your probation and your term in prison that you've paid your debt to society, there really is no rationale left to deny a prisoner or a felon the right to vote. Two years is probably a compromise, if you will, for some that think it should not happen. Ten years is what the present Pardon Board uses as a guideline, is the way I understand it. Two years, really, in essence, doesn't deny much of a participation in the ballot process, under normal...most circumstances, because most elections are two years apart or more. So I support the amendment and the bill.

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Thank you, Senator. Senator Aguilar.

SENATOR AGUILAR: Thank you, Mr. President, members. I rise in support of LB 53. I would support the amendment, and I would support the bill without the amendment as well. I used to serve on the Government Committee, and I've heard a lot of the arguments, and I've always supported this whole concept. I believe that once a person has paid his debt to society, it should be paid in full. There's no sense in kicking a man when he's down. The right to the vote is very precious, and I think if we have an opportunity to help in this matter, we should always do that. Senator Chambers talked about the Pardon Board and how they're reluctant to grant pardons and allow people the opportunity to move on with their lives. We have an opportunity as a body to correct that. We can do something about that in a very positive manner. And I would urge the body to do just that, and voting to support this legislation. Thank you. I'd yield the rest of my time to Senator Chambers, if he chooses to use it.

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Senator Chambers, you have about four