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FLOOR DEBATE

March 10, 2005 LB 53

ended up with 33 or 34 votes without even calling the house on that one. So this debate this morning is important, and I think it's important for us to try to get as many of the issues discussed as we can. I believe there was one other time a bill of mine had a motion to override, and that was the Governor's...or constitutional officers salary bill, but we always have to override those vetoes, and I think somebody else offered the motion. In the Governor's veto message, he said: I firmly believe that any restoration of voting rights should be considered thoughtfully on a case-by-case basis. In other words, it should be a Board of Pardons process. I disagree, for several reasons. First of all, I think that's a subjective process. Secondly, it could change whenever the Board of Pardons decided to change it. They could have changed the ten-year provision years ago, had they wanted to do so. And actually, it would be like being in court for a second time for that ex-felon. I believe that Nebraska's process needs revision. Ten years is a long time to wait, particularly if you consider that you may have already spent a long time either in prison or on parole or whatever. Very few people make it through the pardons process. And I made it a point to look up some information about how many felons are released from prison every year and what the pardons process actually did. So I used the year 2004, and in the year 2004, there 1,214 men and women who were released or discharged from our prison system. Now there were a whole lot of others that were released to parole, that were released from work camp, that were released from evaluation, but those don't count because the only ones we're talking about here are the ones who have completed their sentence and are discharged from the prison system. In comparison, last year...or actually it's Fiscal Year '03-04, because that's the way they compiled the data, there were 145 applications presented to the Pardons Board for consideration. Now if you think about that, think about around 1,000 people released every year from our prison system, and yet we're not having very many people actually apply. Of those 145 applications that were presented, 26 were denied or tabled. So that means 69 people actually got through the Board of Pardons process. Why is that? Well, because the pardons process is somewhat intimidating. Sometimes you even need an attorney to go before the Pardons Board. Secondly, I think people are