

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

March 10, 2005

LB 53

reluctant to dig up their past. They've put their past behind them and they've gotten back out into the community. They've maybe even raised a family, been successful, starting a business, whatever. And they don't want to go back to a public process and have to expose their past to people who may not even know about it at this point. I think it's also difficult to administer for county clerks and election commissioners. And I mentioned to you on General File that we had at our hearing county clerks and election commissions who came in in support of this bill, because as we discussed in a Vote Nebraska Initiative, there are many times when a county clerk or election commissioner is not going to know whether somebody is a convicted felon or not. They're not going to know. So they feel uncomfortable about it and they don't feel comfortable challenging people, so they were very much in favor of making it a straight across-the-board automatic kind of procedure. One of the things that I believe that the Governor mentioned at some time or other, either in newspaper articles or letters or whatever, that there isn't any public support for this, the public doesn't support it. Well, I can at least tell you about one survey that was done and published in a book by two men named Uggen and Manza and they surveyed 1,000 Americans, and those...that poll showed that 80 percent of Americans, of those thousand that were polled, favored restoring voting rights once the sentence was completed, which is what we're trying to do here now. I should mention to you that, again, that the public hearing was very well attended. And in fact, if you look at your gadget and look at the statement, the committee statement, you'll see that there was no opposition to the bill. It was very definitely a huge representation from the public. And I want to remind you that there were committee members who came into that hearing thinking that they weren't going to support it, who left having voted for it in committee with the two-year provision. I also would like to remind you that the Lincoln Journal-Star and the Omaha World-Herald, two of the largest newspapers in the state...or the largest newspapers in the state, have also endorsed the plan. In fact, the Omaha World-Herald said, why wait two years; this seems to be the thing to do. I don't know about you, but I received very few letters, e-mails, or phone calls, in opposition to this bill. The American Bar Association, the American Correctional