

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

April 1, 2005 LR 2

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, one of these days I'm going to share a letter that I got from one of the Nebraska Supreme Court judges about how valuable it is to pay attention to what I say on the floor and look at the legislative history. I'm not saying that for egotistical purposes. Some people may pay attention, and I think when we ravage the constitution, it's important. Obviously, my colleagues don't. But I want to vindicate my judgment and separate myself from the herd. There are plenty of times on the 4th of July and every other formally patriotic periods when everybody will say the right thing, but they do not respect the constitution. Article I, Section 4, of the Constitution of Nebraska says, in pertinent part: "All persons have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences. No person shall be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship against his consent, and no preference shall be given by law to any religious society, nor shall any interference with the rights of conscience be permitted." And some of the case notes below: The Legislature cannot authorize donations by public corporations for religious purposes. That's United Community Services v. Omaha National Bank, 162 Neb. 786. Use of state funds to support a school maintained by religious denomination is in violation of this section, State v. Taylor, 122 Neb. 454. Reading in public schools of passages from the Bible, singing of hymns and offering prayer in accordance with the doctrines of sectarian churches is forbidden by the constitution, State v. Scheve, 65 Neb. 853. When Senator Landis talked about the public schools, they do not allow any of that activity during class time. This is after-school activities. That's why I said generally what he said may be correct. But again, you're dealing with a public building, a public school, and it should be open and available to the public. The erosion of constitutional rights and protections will start at the edges, then the nibbling occurs and it continues to move inward. Then you get to the heart of the document, to its core. And you might have a monumental system failure, and the body dies, which is what's going to happen to the poor Pope with the way they're doing him, another terrible public spectacle. When these individuals and organizations invite the whole world into the interworkings of their operations and show how they treat their leader, they invite