

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

April 5, 2005

LB 709

Jensen and Senator Wehrbein and Senator Engel and Senator Don Pederson. That's another problem that we seem to need to deal with somehow at the state level. But, you know, mentioning all these problems and mentioning and facing this possible cutting of Medicaid, the thing that galls me most is simply this: that back in the early 1990s, under the first President Bush and Senator Clinton, we all went along with, and I went along with because I thought it was the right thing to do, getting rid of all of these people on welfare who were not willing to work, who found a way not to work, and we largely did that. I don't think there are very many people on welfare today that are not out there working if their circumstances allow it. At least anecdotally I would say that the complaints I get about people freeloading off welfare are incredibly lower today than they were back in the early 1990s when we made the change, before we made the change. But here's what's sad about the situation. We've gotten rid of most all of those freeloaders and now everybody on welfare, everybody who's using government programs, the people who are using Medicaid are, by and large, working people. They're, by and large, working people. And I thought that when we got to this time that our commitment to society, that the commitment of the wealthiest country in the world in all of history would be to give the working person a wage by which they could maintain their dignity, maintain their...a decent standard of living, and that our welfare programs became insurance programs for working people who are willing to do their part whenever they could. But, no, we start changing everything. They start working. We talk about family values, and then they have to work a job and a half. Then they don't have time for their kids. Then their kids are doing bad things and we wonder, well, how did we get here? Well, we got here because we didn't properly value family values. But I think we don't have a very broad vision of what family values are if we're allowing to happen the economic cycles that we're creating and allowing to go on. One of the best family values we could have is an adequate financial base for families. That would do more to restore family values than almost anything. I'm just disappointed that we reduce social programs to working people, and then we abandon working people. And, with that, Mr. Lieutenant Governor, I'd withdraw the amendment.