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FLOOR DEBATE

April 19, 2005 LB 70

Senator Smith, to open.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I rise to introduce to you LB 70. I was hoping that it was going to make the consent calendar agenda, but it didn't. So LB 70, we'll have, I'm sure, a vigorous debate. And I think that's relevant and appropriate for a shift in policy. LB 70 proposes to make Nebraska not exactly like our neighboring states, but intends to put Nebraska more in line with our neighboring states, because I believe that we can leverage some personal freedom with building our economy. LB 70 is a bill that says, if you're 21 years of age, you take safety training or have experience, and you wear protective eyewear, you can go without a helmet, should you so choose. Nothing in LB 70 prohibits the use of a helmet, actually, for any reason. Those who would choose to wear a helmet on a motorcycle, while riding a motorcycle, certainly can do that within LB 70. But they have to show a little bit of responsibility first. We've seen trends in the motorcycling public over the last few years, and I would say they're positive trends. Those positive trends state...or, certainly point to the fact that motorcyclists are more responsible, in that they tend to have insurance, as much or more than car drivers, whether it's health insurance or car insurance. But these riders are actually wealthier folks. They're getting older, as an average. We're all getting older as an average, but the average rider in Nebraska is getting older. And we've seen a trend, most recently, that the fewer registrations we have in motorcycles, the fewer deaths and injuries. And then, as the number of motorcycles registered goes up, so goes the number of deaths, and somewhat the number of injuries, but not as correlated closely as the number of deaths compared to the number of registrations. You will hear that unhelmeted motorcyclists have no insurance. Actually, there are insinuations that no motorcyclists have any insurance. I think that's discouraging. We need to look at the big picture here of how we treat various classes of people in Nebraska. I know that we here in the Legislature intend to be fair, and we want to look out for the best in individuals, certainly. But I'm disturbed when I find, after pouring through volumes and volumes of information, that it comes down to the fact that we as policy makers and as lawmakers here in Nebraska discriminate highly