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FLOOR DEBATE

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SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. Michigan voted to repeal their motorcycle helmet law in the senate. And this is from...I'm reading from an article in the Detroit News. And I just think it's very telling. Detroit News says, some things should be too obvious to need debating, such as whether motorcyclists should be required to wear helmets. Yet, the state senate has passed a bill repealing the state helmet law. If motorists...if motorcyclists do not wear helmets, most of them...or, more of them will die, and more will suffer massive brain injuries. This will increase the cost both to the families of the killed and severely impaired cyclists to the medical care system that must cope with the treating of the injury. This is not rocket science. Senators should know better. They have chosen to ignore the evidence that sent the bill ending the helmet requirement to the house, amid some foolish talk about preserving freedom, preserving freedom, as anti-helmet forces watched from the senate gallery. When opponents brought up potential costs both to the cyclists and society, supporters of the bill added a requirement that cyclists carry \$10,000 personal injury insurance policy. Oh, please. I'm reading this. Oh, please. If the bill makes it out of the house, it is expected to be vetoed by Governor Jennifer Granholm, as well as it should be. Just for the record, a study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration noted that when Texas and Arkansas repealed their motorcycle helmet laws in 1997, helmet use declined 66 percent from 97 percent in Texas, to 52 percent from 97 percent in Arkansas. Not surprisingly, death and injuries, both rates increased. In Texas, for example, motorcycle crashes increased 31 percent from 1996 to 1998, from 132...to 132 from 101. Both number of brain injuries and the cost of treating them also increased in Texas. And it does...you know, it would appear that what I had hoped to be as a compromise to move this forward is not going to happen. And so I suppose we need to talk about statistics once more. And the statistics that I see, and from all of the organizations that support helmets, tells us that to repeal this law would cost lives and it would cost injuries. It would be expensive also to the hospitals and to the providers that pick up these individuals and have to care for them, to the taxpayers of Nebraska who have to pay for those costs that go far beyond what