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FLOOR DEBATE

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this bill as amended by the Judiciary Committee, and calling attention to the fact that you can be charged with a IB/IC felony, regardless of...or, in light of how much pseudoephedrine and methamphetamine together you have on your hands. He raises an interesting point, one that I'd like to comment on. The state of Nebraska did get serious about methamphetamine some time ago, when we made the possession of methamphetamine a Class IV felony. We got serious about methamphetamine manufacturing when we made it a Class III felony. Law enforcement has done an excellent job, in my opinion, of being very...paying a lot of attention to this issue, and methamphetamine and the pseudoephedrine thefts across the state of Nebraska, and the anhydrous ammonia. And we've seen a number of convictions, and we've seen meth labs busted. And in and of itself, no law we pass is going to certainly stop the problem. But here's the benefit I see, in a courtroom, to upping the penalties, outside of what Senator Chambers has discussed with the punitive aspect. As we develop drug courts across this state, the best time to intervene with an offender, I've heard from several folks, is when that person is sitting at the county jail, they've been charged with very serious crimes--IB felony, maximum, life imprisonment; IC felony, 50 years maximum imprisonment--and the prosecutor, together with the team that compromises the drug court...that consists of the drug court, says to that person, you have an option here, because you're in possession of methamphetamine, of participating in a two-year program, that is not easy, that is not a copout, that is a way for you to address these issues with counseling and treatment, or you can sit in Tecumseh or Lincoln or York. Senator Aguilar has been the leader on drug courts. Senator Bourne has been very supportive of drug courts; the Governor, the Attorney General. Drug courts make sense. Upping the penalties gives us more leverage to get through and make a connection with somebody. Right now, first offense, possession of meth, oftentimes, as a Class IV felony, is probation; maybe the work camp, depending on your age, in McCook. Second offense is a year in prison. I'd like to see it be a IB felony, an enhanceable penalty if you're doing meth in prison or you're selling meth in prison, because that's the one place we send these young kids who are high on meth, hoping that they'll get some...they'll see the light and stop using, get out, and make a