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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 454

open to honest improvements, and I've asked Senator Chambers for his constructive input, but none has been given just yet. Still, we're going to be on this bill for a while, and if we can use this time to make some productive changes, then I'm all for that. However, before we get too far into the debate, I want to acknowledge the hard work of the body up to this point. When I decided to bring the bill on concealed carry, I did not want to ignore the work that had previously been done. LB 265 from the last biennium was a thoughtful work. It combined the efforts of several senators, including Senators Schellpeper, Janssen, Tyson, and many others. The bill was also thoroughly examined by the Judiciary Committee, under the direction of Speaker Brashear. After LB 265 was advanced, work was also done by this body on the floor, and I've included those amendments in this legislation, as well. Finally, I listened to both the supporters and the opponents. I met with colleagues and I met with law enforcement. After careful consideration, I made the decision to make the State Patrol the issuing agency. That is the primary change in this bill, from LB 265, and it is a positive change. This will ensure that we will have a uniform, statewide application of the Concealed Handgun Permit Act, and I do want to especially commend the Patrol for being both very progressive and accommodating. From day one, the Patrol has told me that we can do this, no problem. I appreciate this positive foresight from our leading law enforcement agency. LB 454 will provide for Nebraskans, who qualify for and receive the necessary permit, the right to carry concealed handguns. This bill requires applicants to successfully complete a safety course prescribed by the State Patrol, to obtain the permit application materials, be fingerprinted, and submit the application to the Patrol, which is the issuing agency under the amendment. Issuance of the permit would be contingent not only on completion of the safety course, but also successfully undergoing a rigorous background check and, in addition, LB 454 sets out conditions under which the permit, once issued, can be revoked. Despite our best intentions to sometimes act otherwise, we are not operating in a vacuum here in Nebraska. Forty-six other states have some sort of legal provision for citizens to carry concealed handguns, with 38 other states having laws quite similar to the one proposed in LB 454. There is every good reason for Nebraskans to enjoy a right presently