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FLOOR DEBATE

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with an exceptionally dangerous blood alcohol content or, BAC. And the primary concern is protecting the public, and this initiative goes, we believe, a long way toward that goal. LB 925 creates new offenses, stiffens penalties for offenders who drive with a BAC of .15 or above. The provision is important for a couple of reasons. First, the .15 threshold is significant, because the empirical scientific data prepared by the Nebraska...excuse me, the National Highway Safety Council shows that the majority of all DUI collisions occurred when the offender's BAC was at .15 or above. And secondly, this provision is important because it would help Nebraska qualify for the receipt of more than \$4.6 million in federal funds over the next four years to use for drunk driving education, prevention, and enforcement, and possibly even community corrections. While the \$4.6 million is a significant factor to consider regarding the merits of LB 925, that sum is overshadowed, we believe, by what LB 925 can help prevent, and that would be the loss of innocent human life. One of the handouts before you that was distributed earlier underscores part of the problem and the need for this type of legislation. Almost 47 percent of the DUI arrests in Nebraska during 2004 had a blood alcohol content of .15 or more. Additionally, almost two out of every five alcohol-related fatalities in our state, equating to about 38 percent, were caused by repeat offenders. Nationally, 58 percent of alcohol-related fatalities involved someone with a .15 BAC or higher. This is because a driver at a .15 BAC is 382 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than someone who has nothing to drink. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conducted a study of Minnesota's enhanced sanctions for higher BACs, found their BAC laws have been effective. State Legislatures magazine actually recently published an article about the NHTSA study, indicating that the high-BAC laws in Minnesota lowered recidivism and refusal rates among high-BAC first-time offenders. One of the charts I provided for you, and you have before you now, provides an in-depth comparison of the various components of this bill, but I'd like to highlight a couple of key points. The bill creates new offenses and increases penalties for offenders convicted of three or more DUI offenses over a 20-year period. It increases penalties for offenders convicted of driving with a blood alcohol content, BAC, of .15 or more. We currently have