

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office  
FLOOR DEBATE

March 29, 2006 LB 239

Senator Thompson, you may have your time back now. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Senator Aguilar. You know, everyone who has spoken has done a really good job of framing this issue, and it is about fairness, it is about children, and it is about our future. What I would like to add is what I learned from serving on the LR 174 Task Force that was created by the Legislature to look at higher education in Nebraska, and so I'm hoping to just add one more reason, and I know it's kind of been touched on by a number of other people here. In the United States, 20 percent of the teenagers are going to be Hispanic by the year 2010. Here in Nebraska, our universities, all of our higher education, we learned in the LR 174 Task Force, is quite worried about the pipeline--how many children are graduating who will go on to college? And as we know from work in the Legislature on what happens when you have declining enrollments, the costs, the fixed costs to a university, community college, any...our state colleges remain the same. You still have the building. You still need to heat it. You might be able to lay off a faculty member or two, but the cost to the university are pretty fixed. If we aren't looking to those best and brightest folks that are out there to come into that university system and make sure that we're creating a pathway for them, we are really hurting higher education in Nebraska, just as the student Senator Aguilar referred to. What we need to be doing in terms of public policy is creating the opportunities. It's certainly not the kids' fault that the parents have some issues that put them in a different position to be able to go on to college. We can do something about that. We can level the playing field. We can make it fair. They're still going to have to earn money and take out loans and do all those kinds of things to get their education paid for, but we should, as in terms of all the policy here, be doing this for a lot of reasons. But we are a state...and Senator Brashear, I've heard his stump speech a lot, we have the same population as we had 100 years ago in this state. We have a new population. We would have lost a congressional district. We've been talking about this earlier. We would have lost a congressional district last time had it not been for new immigration in the state. We