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January 28, 2004 LB 656

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President and members. Trying to sift through all of the details of the bill, LB 656, and I want to support it and I am rising in support of LB 656. I think that we need to constantly be thinking of ways to work outside the box, as we hear all the time, of new ways of doing things, and I think that a lease-purchase arrangement, because it's worked well with other government entities, I think we can leverage some private participation and everyone gains from a more efficient operation. And so I respectfully oppose the motion to indefinitely postpone, and certainly support Senator Aguilar's efforts in advancing LB 656. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Smith. Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the body, I have concerns about the bill and would like to just kind of get to some of that, and some of it goes back to my years on a county board during a time when we did build a jail and also had to deal with issues of how we were going to manage juvenile offenders. And one of the conclusions that I came to, after talking with consultants who seem to appear whenever there's a possibility of providing a way to provide business for them, was that I really have reservations about putting this part of government work outside of the process through a county board and through the county sheriff, and I would be concerned about a patchwork across the state of how jails are managed and how they interact with their communities. When I was on the county board, I had calls all the time from motel owners and warehouse owners. Everybody had a building that they wanted used, a new piece of land. I think there are a lot of pressures on county officials from people they know in the county to look at those kinds of ways to deal with these things. We did not do that. We chose to look at the juvenile population in a different way. And actually now, after a number of years, instead of privately contracting that, Sarpy County runs one of the, in my view, most advanced juvenile facilities in the state, merging a lot of different areas in one building, having control over those areas through the county board and the county sheriff's office, but also housing probation officers, interacting with the community, things that I think happen best with local governance and also with your own employees. The nature of a jail, when I was