

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Koch.

SENATOR KOCH: Mr. President and members of the body, LB 207 is the result of a committee study of driver's education. The committee felt that this bill was important enough to advance to the floor for general discussion. In the early 1960's, this Legislature saw fit to pass legislation which does not mandate driver's education but allows it to be an elective course. At that time, they felt that they should offer some subsidy to the schools who offered this course in the amount of \$40. At that time that was appropriate. However, since that time, as you know the costs have escalated considerably and I give you a very brief background on this. One is the automobiles they used to get from the automobile dealers of their various districts, they would deliver them in good faith, not only in terms of developing students in terms of driver safety and defensive driving and rules of the road but also insurance agencies felt that those students who take driver's ed also were a more bona fide insured person because of this behind the wheel and in the classroom activity, and for those of you who may not know, there is 36 hours of classroom instruction and also a number of hours behind the wheel. Our study brought to us this year that the cost of driver's education across the state averaged one hundred and fifty some dollars but we are still providing to those same schools forty dollars. Some schools do it a little more efficiently because of the masses of students they serve and some schools where they have few students find it rather expensive and we feel that this bill merits your consideration. Now we had several choices. One is we could have brought to you the idea that we will increase the license. We just did this a couple of years ago, and then take that amount of money off the licenses and provide it to the Department of Education to be refunded to the schools based upon the number of students who participate in the program. However, as you know, there is a certain amount of the license money which goes into our general fund and we feel that the best way to reward the schools is to move the money from the general fund to the driver's education fund under the Department of Education and then pass it back to the schools who provide the program. I don't know whether you know it or not but probably at least...our latest figure is that 70% of the students in the public schools do take driver's education and they also serve, whether you know it or not, the schools of the private sector who many times take these courses during the summer time and avail themselves of this opportunity, those schools particularly in the highly impacted areas where the population is the greatest. So what we are proposing to you is basically this, that we want to increase the