

SPEAKER MARVEL: The motion is carried. The bill is advanced. The next bill is LB 305.

CLERK: Mr. President, LB 305 offered by Senator Beutler. (Read title). The bill was first read on January 19 last year, referred to the Education Committee for public hearing. The bill was advanced to General File. Mr. President, I have no amendments to the bill.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Beutler, do you want to explain the bill first?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, LB 305 contains one and only one concept and it essentially raises the compulsory school age from 16 to 17. And my sole and entire purpose in presenting the bill is to try to encourage parents and students to complete their high school education. I think as a society in our society today which is becoming ever more complex where job skills are ever more important, that it is important for us to make a statement as a Legislature that we think it would be good for the youth of this state to complete their high school education, that it will be good for them in terms of their education as a citizen, in terms of some additional vocational education that they can acquire, and in terms of their saleability on the job market. I think that no one will disagree that a person with a high school diploma has more of an opportunity on the job market than one without, generally speaking. The word "compulsory", of course, has bad connotations but I want to make a comment on that. The compulsory education law in Nebraska is not particularly well enforced. If a student doesn't really want to go to school, we in this state have not traditionally forced him to be in school, and I don't assume that that judgment will change regardless of what we do with the law today. If we change the compulsory age from 16 to 17, the law will still be pretty much administered as it is today. So we will not be forcing disciplinary problems into the schools but what we will be doing is encouraging a portion of those students and a portion of those parents, a large portion of them I think, into thinking about the value of completing the education and going ahead and completing the education. Age 17 doesn't bring you to the end of your high school career in most cases but I think that it does get you close enough so that you can see the light at the end of the tunnel so that you can see putting in the extra time to go ahead and get that extra vocational course or to go ahead and get that diploma which I think in almost all cases will be helpful for the student. There is no particular logic to age 16. I think there is a logic to age 17, more of