

SPEAKER NICHOL: Back to the bill. Senator Lowell Johnson.

SENATOR L. JOHNSON: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, yesterday or the last time this was before us there was considerable discussion about the self-seeking grandparents who may swarm into the courts and overload them with an abundance of cases, trying to test their right for visitation with their grandchildren. We had the Legislative Research Division of our own Legislature check into this, and when the bill was under discussion last year, while there is not a whole lot of data gathered on it, there was some significant items which they reported. The data would indicate that this type of law is infrequently used, and that the cases are generally meritorious and not frivolous or abusive. The State of New York, which is one of seven states which has very liberal visitation requisites, and has an extremely broad law and a population 15 times our own, has had only 22 reported cases as of May 1985. Delaware, another state with liberal laws, has fewer than 30 reported cases in effect since...and that law has been in effect since 1977. Iowa, with a similar law, has had only one case appealed as of May 1985. So the report itself indicates that many cases screen themselves prior to the filing of such requests. The conclusion of the report, I think, was clear that the cases were generally meritorious, not frivolous nor abusive. The report concluded, "No one could cite an instance where the statutes were used to harass the parent or parents involved." I think those are significant results of a survey that our own Research Department took care of. In answer to some of the other items about whether or not it is good, I think that the past year or so has seen many articles and much attention devoted to this very subject. Our Silver-Haired Legislature, in their fifth session, passed SB 6 and designated it as one of their own priority subjects. And by resolution, just recently or last summer, the Silver-Haired Legislature urged adoption of LB 105. In one of the U.S. News Reports, in 1984, they carried an article entitled, "America's Forgotten Resource, Grandparents." In that article Donald Conroy, of the National Institute for the Family, is quoted, "Grandparents are our greatest forgotten resource. We need to find more ways by which they can share their skills and their perspectives. Grandparents and grandchildren need each other. The rapid social changes we witness every day, and which affect our families over several decades now really threaten the generation bond as most of us have known it.