

mediation, in effect, is a freeing up of the parties from the normal divorce proceeding because I will tell you there is very few...there are very few actions in court that are more intrusive in the daily lives of individuals than divorce cases. But the mediation process, hopefully, will free up the parties in the proper cases where there is not evidence of abuse,...

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR ASHFORD: ...where there is not evidence of abuse, free up those individuals to try to reach a parenting plan. The five or six areas that the parenting plan is to discuss or to concern itself with are the normal types of issues that are talked about in divorce cases anyway. There is nothing particularly revolutionary about those. So the idea of the bill now is, one, to let people know that there is mediation available, and, two, to...the parties, if they agree, can go through mediation and, three, if they agree on a parenting plan, the court is to take that agreement into consideration in reaching a final decision. That's, to me, that's what the bill says now, and I think...I realize I'm probably not meeting Senator Chambers' concerns on this one issue, but we are trying to react to his concerns about the state intruding to an extensive degree into the lives of these parties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER BAACK: Time. Thank you, Senator Ashford. Senator Rasmussen, you are next.

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: Mr. Speaker, members, I remain vigorously or strenuously opposed to this amendment. I would remind Senator Chambers that it is he I took lessons from on how to do this. I do remain opposed to this amendment because I am concerned about it disrupting a process that we have in place, and that says that in order to protect the children of this state, anybody who suspects, not concerns, but suspects child abuse is to report it, and that includes people who are in otherwise confidential relationships, counselors and clients, physicians and patients. They, too, are to report if they suspect the incidence of child abuse, and I think what Senator Ashford is about to offer as an amendment reflects what is the frequent practice in those professional relationships and that is to indicate to clients, to patients up front that if anyone reports suspected abuse or indicates that there may be abuse going on, that the professional is obligated under the law to report that. It is important to remember that it is not the professional, not the