

SPEAKER BAACK: The committee amendments are adopted. Senator Abboud, would you like to open on the bill?

SENATOR ABOUD: Mr. Speaker and members, the additional part of the bill, now that we've added the committee amendments, provides that it would equalize the crime of child abuse with the crime of first degree assault. Currently, with respect to an injury that's been inflicted on a child, you can have two cases, one with and the second without serious bodily injury. The former, with serious bodily injury, would be a Class III felony, without serious bodily injury would be a Class IV felony. Now that sounds like a good idea but currently everything is a Class IV and this provides for the same exact penalty that we currently have for first degree...or assault upon an individual, an adult. And what this provides for is make the laws equal or the same when it comes to an assault on a child as assault on an adult. So currently in the statute we have that if there is serious bodily injury to an adult, the penalty is a Class III felony; if it's without serious bodily injury, it's a Class IV felony, and this provides that in instances where there is injury to the child the penalty is the same as towards an adult, so it equalizes the penalty. Currently, in the State of Nebraska we have...the Department of Social Services investigated over 7,993 cases of child abuse, of this 541 children in 3,428 families were substantiated as having been abused. The increase over the prior year was over 9 percent. We have a problem with child abuse in this state and this provides for an increase...provides for an equalization as to the penalty provisions towards children the same as when we have assaults upon adults. Thank you.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Abboud. Mr. Clerk, an amendment.

CLERK: Senator Abboud, AM1123 is to be withdrawn to that...

SPEAKER BAACK: It is withdrawn.

CLERK: Senator Abboud would move to amend with AM1550...I'm sorry, AM1447. (The Abboud amendment appears on pages 1450 and 1550 of the Legislative Journal.)

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Abboud.