

**National speed limit disputed**

**Chambers asserts interstates made for speed**

By Patti Gallagher

Talk to Ernie Chambers about speed limits and radar devices and he might show you his driving record. It shows he has no points against his license.

Then ask him why he's showing it to you and he might tell you it's to prove that his bills to increase the speed limit and restrict radar are not motivated by a bad driving record.

Last week, Chambers, a state senator from Omaha, introduced in the Legislature a bill to change the interstate speed limit from 55 mph to 65 mph.

Contrary to what opponents say, the change would both increase safety and save fuel, Chambers said.

Interstates are engineered for speed, Chambers said. The double lanes, medians, longer curves and lack of obstacles makes them efficient at higher speeds, he said.

A higher interstate speed limit would encourage drivers to leave other roads and use the interstate, Chambers said.

As for fuel conservation, Chambers said, lower speed limits cause constant stops and starts that waste gas.

**Tried before**

Although similar legislation sponsored by Chambers in the 1976-77 session was not approved, failing final reading by two votes, Chambers said he thinks LB143 has a good chance of passing this year. After all, he's got the Republican Party behind him, he said.

The Party's campaign platform promised to abolish the federally mandated 55 mph limit. The action is supported by Sen. S. I. Hayakawa, D-Calif., who is sponsoring legislation to remove the 55 mph law and let each state set its own speed limit.

The U.S. Transportation Secretary also supports allowing each state to set its own limits, Chambers said.

Chambers said there is a threat of losing federal aid, but he doesn't believe that will happen.

In the past, when Nebraska law has been contrary to federal law, he said, federal aid has not been repealed. The Nebraska laws removing the motorcycle helmet requirement and the use of state money to repair federal roads are two examples, he said. Both moves were sponsored by Chambers.

State and national highway fatality figures have been used in the support of the 55 mph limit.

**Figures questioned**

Most figures show that deaths have decreased since the speed limit was lowered nationally to 55 mph in 1974. Prior to 1974, the limit was 75 mph on Interstate 80, which crosses Nebraska.

Chambers said, however, that the figures are drawn from total road fatalities. Deaths on highways and city streets account for the greatest number of fatalities, he said.

LB413 would strengthen regulations on what Chambers called "junk radar." Present radar is not reliable and police officers are not properly trained to use it, he said.

The bill specifies that officers be properly trained, radar equipment be tested before use, an officer visually observe a speeding vehicle, and offenders be allowed to observe the recorded speed on the radar device.

Chambers who has challenged the use of radar before, said most radar equipment is inaccurate.

Chambers most recent involvement with radar came to court in May of 1980. Although Chambers was clocked at 66 mph by radar, the charge could not be proved in court.

"Every time I've gone up against them I've won," he said.

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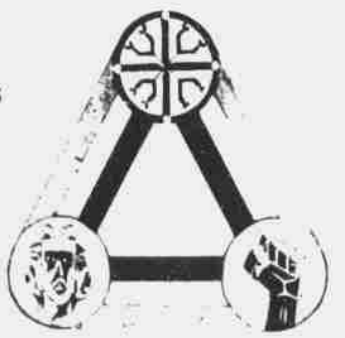
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