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is the Rural Health Opportunities Program, a cooperative venture between the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Chadron and Wayne State Colleges. Twenty-six students currently enrolled at the state colleges, and who are committed to remaining in rural Nebraska to practice, will begin their health professional training at UNMC this year. They and those who follow them will receive financial assistance through the creation of a new loan program. State dollars will be matched by UNMC and rural communities will be asked to pay back the loans in return for practice commitments from these students. For state government Medicaid is clearly at the top of the health care agenda. Medicaid costs grew by more than 48 percent over the past two years, they will account for more than \$72 million of all new expenditures in the coming biennium. With the help of the Legislature we've begun to...we've taken steps to begin controlling the costs of public assistance. While tax dollars to some programs have been curtailed, in many cases the services are now being provided by volunteers in the true Nebraska spirit. The Department of Social Services is moving aggressively to streamline administration and to implement managed care programs. This will also help control costs. These steps alone are not sufficient to plug the gap. Like many other states we need to look seriously at other sources of funding for Medicare...Medicaid. We're working with the health care industry on several alternatives including a provider fee. This is not the option I prefer, and I'm hopeful that an alternate solution can be achieved. However, my budget assumes that action will be taken in this area. Another high-cost aspect of the state budget, one with the potential to skyrocket, is our prison system. We're currently operating at more than 153 percent of capacity. Now make no mistake, convicted criminals who pose any substantial risk should not be released prior to completing their terms. Prisons are needed to protect the public, but they're also costly to build and operate. There are opportunities to reduce the cost of criminal justice while protecting the public, and I intend to explore those options. Our law enforcement community is doing outstanding work. The Nebraska State Patrol has increased DWI arrests to an all-time high. Drug seizures by the patrol are up markedly, and overall drug arrests are up 66 percent. A large percentage of our prison population suffers from substance abuse problems, therefore I am recommending nearly \$3.8 million over the next biennium to maintain operation of the Lincoln Airpark facility for treatment programs. Nebraskans are reasonable people, we understand that public services cost money which requires the