

this amendment to be the investigative arm of anybody. If, in fact, there is just not enough information, and it needs more, then it's going to refer it to the investigative agencies and that ought to happen. What the amendment is designed to do is to recognize that in this bill, and I guess I haven't commended Senator Ashford for bringing this bill forward, and I know he is on the verge of maybe frustration, but this is an important bill to him and I think the State of Nebraska. We all recognize that mediation is good. Child abuse is bad. You know, we could take that philosophy, mediation good, child abuse bad, but damn few things are black and white, and in this case, they are not. We have competing interests that ought to be considered together. You can have mediation and you can have unsubstantiated allegations of child abuse that ought not terminate mediation. You certainly can have mediation and any substantial allegations of child abuse ought to terminate mediation and there ought to be an investigation. I think what this does is allow us to go forward with both processes fairly. I certainly don't want to see the mediation process be used to circumvent the reporting process on child abuse investigations. That is not the intent of the amendment. The intent of the amendment, however, is to allow both to continue. Because, frankly, if you have a successful mediation in a dissolution case, even with an alleged report of child abuse that is later determined to be unfounded by the court, it is good. It is good to have that process continue. It is good to have the parties get together and try to resolve how their differences and concerns with respect to those children in the parenting plan is going to be implemented. That is a good philosophy. If, in fact, the court, and I, frankly, trust the courts to do this, if, in fact, the courts have a concern that there is not enough information or, frankly, that the report might be founded, they are going to take steps to protect those kids because underlying all of this is the best interest of the children, and they are going to take steps to make sure that those children are protected. I think the amendment and the Chambers amendment sort of try to reach a balance in both of those areas. I do not believe they do damage to the legitimate concern which I feel is the primary concern and that is the reporting of child abuse allegations, where there are some reason to believe that they ought to be reported, but it also allows those reports to be made in such a fashion that we don't have to terminate completely the mediation process and throw up the barriers that will ultimately result in long-term damage to the kids, which is what we are trying to avoid. I'd urge adoption of the amendment to the amendment, and