

change dramatically the bill from one that is very comprehensive in nature to trying to change a number of things that we have found to be a problem with our current health care system in Nebraska, to focusing in on those elements of the bill that are the priority concerns that we need to address to reform our health care system to start to meet the needs of our citizens and recognize the call across this country for reform of health care. It's really unfortunate that we don't have more senators up here and we don't have any of the TV cameras and any of the real focus on the issue that there should be because, of all the issues that we have to deal with this session, probably none eclipses this particular one of how we change the health care system in our state. As I have indicated before in discussion about the health care issue, we have a total General Fund budget of about \$1.6 billion and it's going to go up over the next couple years. But the expenditures on health care far overshadow how much we spend on our General Fund. We spend almost three times as much on health care as we do the General Fund state budget in the State of Nebraska. The expenditures on health care are over \$4.5 billion at this time this year. That is reflected in a number of ways that we pay for various health care services. We pay for it through Medicaid, through state taxes. We pay for it through state employee health insurance. We pay for it through school employee insurance. We pay for it through county employee health insurance. We pay for it through Medicare payments through the federal government. We pay for it through the insurance coverage of the federal employees. We pay for it through assistance programs that are myriad in nature that are both at the federal, state and county level. We pay for it and pay for it and pay for it. Now it's time, I think, to try and find a way to control some of the costs of health care. And we have been trying and battling now for many, many years on this issue. This is my fifteenth year in the Legislature. We have made exceedingly small progress on this, excruciatingly painful progress on this issue. All we've gotten are a few things that provide for some data information on some costs to hospital consumers and itemized bill form and we have the certificate of need process in place. And outside of that there really isn't very much currently that we're doing to deal with the issue of health care in terms of coordinating the system and containing the costs of the system. And if there is anything that is driving part of the Medicaid cost problem, it's got to be the overall health cost increases. When you have the increases in Medicaid that we have seen that are skyrocketing from in 1990 something like \$96 million we spent on Medicaid to