

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Byars.

SENATOR BYARS: Thank you, Madam President. First, I want to take a minute to commend Senator Wesely because I know that he has done a tremendous amount of work on 827 and I know this comes from deep within his heart and a long-standing conviction that there need to be changes made in the health care process in the State of Nebraska, and I commend him for that. I think he has been an outstanding advocate for health care for all Nebraskans, no matter whether they live in the rural or the urban areas, and I certainly have a good deal of respect for him for that regard. I...as Senator Wesely is aware, we've had discussions from the beginning of the introduction of LB 827. I have some very serious reservations personally about the entire bill but specifically about parts of the bill that I feel could be very punitive to rural health care. I think that we need to have some dialogue, some discussion relative to this and see what happens. Obviously, we have several groups in the State of Nebraska right now working to present a health care plan. The Governor's Blue Ribbon Coalition that the Health Committee met with last week, the Interagency Health Care Committee the Governor has appointed and Senator Wesely is a member of, I'm hopeful that those two groups will come together working on parallel paths and at some point intertwine to come up with some recommendations to the Governor and to this body on where we go with health care. That's part of the problem that I have with 827. Even though I think that probably a strengthening of the certificate of need process is one that I don't have a problem with, I've sat on that Certificate of Need Review Committee before I came into the Legislature and I certainly see the need. But I have a problem with moving forward in the manner that we're doing in LB 827 and thus is the basis for my amendments. And on Journal page 2148, these amendments have been printed, and they go directly to the heart, I think, of what we're talking about on the certificate of need process in 827. Now understand that what I'm asking to do is to strike this from the committee amendments, which become the bill in 827. This will not do away with the certificate of need process. Those statutes that cover the certificate of need process will still be in effect. We're moving forward in other budget appropriations legislation to change the fee process to make that more appropriate. So understand, this will not change that, but it does change in this particular piece of legislation what happens. On page 9, my amendment asks to strike lines 1 through 10, and basically what this is is the certificate of