

SENATOR NICHOL: Mr. Chairman, members of the Legislature. In talking with Mr. Phillips, at Grand Island a few days ago who is in charge of the Veterans Administration facilities of this type in the state, he said that this half a million dollars originally was money that was the property of the Veterans Administration. It was put back into the Administration...into the General Fund and that is where it is now. We should get it out this year. The reason they should get it out this year is if they do not get it out this year they lose it. Since it really is their money to start with I feel we should give it back to them. They do have some plans, Senator Marsh. I don't know if I have them in my office, but I don't have them at the moment with me. I will be glad to get what I have as soon as possible. But they do have some plans. As you know they have facilities at three places--Norfolk, Grand Island and Scottsbluff. The plans at Scottsbluff are for the remodeling of one of the Vanguard Halls which was formerly a part of Hiram Scott and is a three story building, four buildings, three stories high that are put up in prefab nature so that they can take these sections down and put them all on one floor, which is their intention, as I understand it, now. I couldn't say that these funds would be used at that site. I think perhaps Grand Island or Norfolk have priority, but I'm not sure of this. They do have plans, Senator Marsh. I strongly urge that we give this money back to the Veterans Administration since it was their money to start with. They must have it back this year or they lose it.

PRESIDENT: Senator Jerry Warner.

SENATOR WARNER: Mr. President, if I may have the attention of the body because this is a little involved. If the amendment is adopted actually what we will need to do is go back and amend LB 532 and add one half million dollars to the operations for the veterans home, from General Fund money, at Grand Island. As I understand, and Senator Rasmussen has indicated the same, there is a per diem payment made by the Veterans Administration to the state for those individuals who are at Grand Island. A year ago or so they increased that per diem payment, but it had a retroactive date. Because of that retroactive date, and this pay is for operations, because of that retroactive date it was approximately half a million dollars or one half million dollars that the state received over and above what was authorized or expected to be spent for the operations of the plant. The bill that was introduced, LB 315, would have had the effect of earmarking those funds for future construction there. The problem we're in that the Governor's appropriation bill used that \$500,000 as a part of the cost for the operation at Grand Island. The Appropriations Committee used the same \$500,000 for the operation of the facilities at Grand Island. It came to the state for the purpose of operating money. The only point I think you want to be sure that you understand is if we adopt the amendment it will be necessary to replace an equal amount in 532 from the General Fund for the operations. It is probably one of these cases where the bill, having been in two different committees and two different... or the issue in two different committees and two different committees taking different action, it needs to be resolved here at this point. So your decision is really a dual one. Not only would you be setting aside these funds, but it will be necessary to increase the General Fund appropriation in LB 532.