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outpatient prescription drugs has risen considerably faster in recent years. From 1999 to 2000 alone, spending on retail outpatient prescription drugs increased 19 percent. The Nebraska Consortium for Seniors...or for Citizens with Disabilities also state the high cost of prescription drugs has a disproportional impact on people with disabilities because many are on fixed incomes and often prescription drugs are necessary to alleviate symptoms associated with their disability. Simply put, access to affordable prescription medication is essential from a quality of life perspective and, in some areas, for life itself. As advocates for people with disabilities, we strongly recommend LB 1148 and its recognition of the economic impact prescription drug cost have on our society, and strongly encourage the use and study to identify effective ways to provide needed prescription drugs for all Nebraskans. Now, what might a study entail? I just want to mention to you that NCSL, in a recent publication, mentioned what other states are doing. I would like to think Nebraska could join in with this. NCSL, particularly in the northeastern part of the United States--Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont--have joined together on a purchasing pool and to address the prescription drugs. At a meeting that was convened in November, seven states--Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, South Carolina, and West Virginia--were seeking a multistate bid to serve an estimated 1.4 billion public employees and their families. The seven states will pay out about \$853 million for employee pharmaceutical claims alone. Western officials, including Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming, have had discussion. Both chambers in Idaho and Washington State passed resolutions in 2001 favoring joint pharmaceutical purchasing. I think that is one area that we could enter into and on, matter of fact, April 4th, I, along with a couple members from the Health and Human Services Department...

SENATOR CUDABACK PRESIDING

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR JENSEN: ...will go to Kansas City to a reforming states