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FLOOR DEBATE

April 9, 2002

LB 1084

Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: LB 1084, by Senator Connealy. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 14 of this year. Referred to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. The bill was advanced to General File. I have no amendments to the bill at this time, Mr. President.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Connealy, you're recognized to open.

SENATOR CONNEALY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members, LB 1084 would prioritize where we place new employees of the state. The whole state, along with the whole nation, as we've been dealing with since the beginning of the Legislature, is in an economic downturn. But to a large extent, rural Nebraska has been in that economic downturn for...for many years. We have roads, buildings, educational institutions, and other infrastructures in rural areas that are going unused or underused due to declining population and economic activity in our rural areas. The Legislature, with the idea of Senator Bourne last year, made a step to turn that around and site our jobs in rural areas. Even though there were some people within the state government who would of rather had it sited here in Lincoln, last year we sited an operation of state government in a rural area. We called for the Treasurer's Child Support Collector Center to be placed in a rural area, and we put it in Wausa, Nebraska. This move added 30 jobs to a community who is under 2,500. It was actually under...under 1,000, and it had enormous amount of effect on that community's economic activity. This innovative approach of siting state workers has been allotted, and really, I think it developed a lot of side benefits. I introduced LB 1084 this year to take that action a step farther. LB 1084 includes a mechanism to put this approach in state statute. It calls for it to be our intent, all things being equal, that a state job be placed in a rural area where it could have greater impact in creating jobs and creating economic activity. We're not going to change the whole state government by doing this, but it just makes good sense to put our economic engine of state government where it can do the most good. If you look at rural communities, as I said, we have buildings and