

strongly urge you to support this amendment.

PRESIDENT: Senator Labeledz.

SENATOR LABEDZ: Just a few words on the building itself. The Douglas County Annex was going to be closed anyway. As Senator Fitzgerald said, Douglas County Hospital is 60% vacant. In order to save costs for Douglas County they are moving the patients from the Annex to Douglas County Hospital. They assured us that because of the highly trained people that they have at the Annex now, they will be given the choice of whether they go to work at the hospital or remain at the Veterans Home. We know in no way would let any of those highly trained people go because they are at a minimum in Nebraska and even in Omaha. Also the Federal Government, if it was a new construction as we were going for in the beginning, a new building, the Federal Government would only finance 65% of new construction. We would have to put in, the State of Nebraska, 35% which meant for the building that they had in mind, about fourteen, fifteen million dollars and the State of Nebraska's cost would be anywhere from four to six million. As we said, the operational cost according to the Fiscal Office, about \$978,000 the first year. Grand Island showed us some figures and we will bring those up later, where at one time the state was financing the Veterans Home out there about ten years ago to the tune of about 70%. As the years went by I think we are down to about 30% which means that that is the total amount of funding the state now gives to the Veterans Home in Grand Island. We are missing a lot of federal funds by not having our veterans in a Veterans Home because they will allocate so much per day, per patient or per resident. If we did go into a new building as we had originally planned, we would have to be on a waiting list and according to the Federal Government that would have taken years and years. Right now with the age of World War II veterans, they are in their sixties and seventies, the waiting list is long. By taking the Annex we are not only saving the state a lot of money, but we are helping the veteran to get immediately. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Speaking now to the Fitzgerald amendment, Senator Maresh, do you wish to speak to the...?

SENATOR MARESH: Yes, Mr. President, I think we are really fortunate to be able to acquire this facility and our Business and Labor Committee has been studying how we could create more employment in Omaha where the unemployment rate is probably the highest in the state and I think this is a case where we can provide jobs for these people and keep the