

March 6, 1980

LB 789

I think maybe perhaps we will be able to get the information from the Appropriations Committee when they have their briefing or informational evenings with us. Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL PRESIDING

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Johnson.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I just want to make a couple of points about LB 789, and the first is that this bill would provide, in effect, approximately a seventeen percent increase in the amount of assistance that we are providing children, needy children in the State of Nebraska. Now that is seventeen percent since the last time this Legislature provided an increase which was in 1977. Now you know since 1977 the cost of living has risen more than seventeen percent. In fact, here is where the figure came from. I contacted the Director of the Nebraska Department of Public Welfare last summer and I asked the Director by letter how much the ADC benefits would have to be increased to keep up with the cost of living and his statistician came back and said that we would need to have a seventeen percent increase in benefits to keep up with the cost of living from the time ADC benefits were last increased to the date of his letter which was last July. We would need, however, based on expected cost of living increases, a thirty percent increase to actually conform to cost of living increases from 1977 until July of this year when this legislation would become effective. So this bill, if passed in the present form, will still not provide our needy children enough money to even keep up with the cost of living increases in this state. This is a very modest effort on our part. Now right now there is legislation in Congress that is designed to redo in many respects the children and family programs and one of the things that this legislation is designed to do is to provide, in effect, a floor below which no state payments can fall, and in analyzing this legislation, Congress has ascertained what the collective worth of state benefits are to needy children. Right now in this state, Nebraska's ADC payments coupled with a federal food stamp bonus provides our needy children and families seventy-two percent of the poverty guideline. Now the poverty guideline in this state, actually the national poverty guideline provides a very basic subsistence measure, a measure below which no child should fall, because when children's income falls below the poverty guideline, they truly are children at risk, at risk of broken homes,