

SENATOR HIGGINS: Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I agree with Senator Wiitala and I agree with most of what everybody else has said but I think we are overlooking one point. We have got a Department of Public Institutions. We have got a Department of Corrections. We have got a Department of Welfare. What do we pay these people? How much do we look into their background before we hire them? How many of them get a job because they are good old Uncle Joe's nephew and they are not really qualified? We read last year about a couple of doctors at Hastings that resigned because they were addicted to drugs or rather at Norfolk. I understand one of them is now practicing, as Senator Kahle said, practicing, again, only this time he is practicing at the Hastings Regional Center. Maybe we need to take a long hard look at everything that this state is running, Department of Public Institutions, Corrections, Welfare, and maybe we had better take a look at the applications. Are we hiring just anybody that walks off the street? I know in Omaha, if you want to be a houseparent to four or five retarded children, the requirement is a high school diploma, period. So maybe the fault lies with us. We don't pay enough money to attract people who want to support their families the same as we want to support ours, and maybe we just will take anybody that walks in off the street and not really look too closely at their applications. But I think we have got to let the buck stop here and we ought to do some studying and we ought to come up with some results for next year on how to prevent these claims from occurring, and if we have to do some firing, do some firing, and if we have to raise some wages, let's raise them. I am not talking about the high-priced directors and assistant directors, et cetera. I am talking about the people that work day to day with the convicts, with the retarded, with the handicapped, with the elderly, the ones that are out there really working. These people are the lowest paid and these people have the hardest part of the job and I can see where they become disgruntled and dissatisfied and sometimes they take it out on the very people they are supposed to be taking care of. So I am going to support LB 548 and I hope that we all think about our own consciences and how much are we responsible for the way these institutions are being run right now. Thank you, Senators.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator DeCamp.

SENATOR DeCAMP: I am not going to talk at this time, I guess. I will wait until Select when they try to take it off.

SENATOR CLARK: The question before the House is the advancement of 548. All those in favor vote aye, all those opposed