

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Labeledz. Senator Wesely, are you going to handle the opposition?

SENATOR WESELY: Yes. Well, I will speak for the committee and then I will defer to Senator Labeledz for the last couple of minutes, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Okay.

SENATOR WESELY: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, as Vice Chairman of the Public Health Committee I would like to tell you why the committee has not acted on this bill and the background of the legislation. I will try to be brief. Obviously, Senator VonMinden feels strongly about the legislation but let me tell you there are also people who feel very strongly on the other side of the issue, and that is why the bill has been held in committee and that is why I believe it is important that we not lift the bill out of committee. Number one, let me tell you that this issue was discussed in Special Session last fall and we decided that it was the public policy of this state to care for mothers and their unborn children from the moment that they are identified as being pregnant because of our concern for their health and our concern that they not choose abortion, because of the fact that they don't have the money to support themselves. And I think that was good policy decision. It meant that the state would have to pick up what the federal government used to have to pay between the time that they were identified as pregnant and the six months after they had been pregnant. So it did cost the state additional money but I think it was money well spent. Now, the bill was reintroduced this year to go back to the system that was argued in the Special Session of not caring for the unborn and for the mother before the pregnancy has been terminated, and it seems to me that we made a number of mistakes by not...by following the proposal Senator VonMinden has, but we did look at the idea that dealt with this problem. That was in Iowa and South Dakota. They were talking about people coming to Nebraska to get these benefits. Number one, the Welfare Department says, that's not really so that we haven't seen any of this happening. Senator VonMinden argues the other way, but we felt that if there was some other people coming in from other states, we ought to do something about it so we asked for a one year residency on the benefits and we found that that was unconstitutional, so we held the bill for that. Now we are in the position to kill the bill, but we decided not to do that because Senator VonMinden wanted to discuss it on the floor and we wanted to give him....