

in this Legislature has heard from the county officials on this issue. That is why Senator Kahle's own county has endorsed LB 522, because they know they have no local control and they know all they are doing is paying the bills. But if LB 522 fails to advance, then I think the bill ought to be used for this purpose. It ought to be used to adopt an amendment to reinstate, for the counties, the cost of paying for the welfare workers that the state pays for now. It ought to be used to give the counties the opportunity to assert their local control by picking up that 6% Medicaid that we just gave to them over the last several years. If the counties want control then pay for it. But, we have been bailing them out for years and I think that is right, but why stop halfway. I'm saying to the counties today you can't have it both ways. You can't force the State of Nebraska to operate an expensive, duplicative, high overhead program so that you can have some "local control" in it and still come here and ask us to continue to bail you out. I think LB 522 is a logical, rational move. I think it is legitimately state responsibility and it is clear the County Officials Association supports this bill as do a lot of people who want to meaningfully reform the welfare system in the State of Nebraska. But again I would say to you, if we do not advance this bill today then it is time for us to make a decision. If we want local control then there has got to be more local dollars involved too, and it is time to stop this phase out of bailing the counties out. The choice is clear. State control or move the other direction to let the counties pay for the control that Senator Kahle says they want. Again, I don't think that is the county position. The county officials are supporting LB 522. . .

PRESIDENT: One minute Senator Cullan.

SENATOR CULLAN . . . I think we should too. Lets move this bill now.

PRESIDENT: Chair recognizes Senator Hefner.

SENATOR HEFNER: Mr. President and colleagues, I wasn't going to speak on this bill but I think I should. This is because I think we need to keep some local control in our welfare program. Senator Cullan says that if we supply the money then we should have full control. So I submit to him that we pay out nearly half of the money that we collect and half of our budget goes to local government. I think we ought to take a little time on this. I think we ought to vote red on this bill today and discuss it a