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LB 942

not being able to eat an optional service. So I would have to say that this amendment is designed to take care of some of the needs that people have and at the same time protect a certain class of the industries that provide health care at the expense of those who really need some of these alleged optional services. I think this is just a replay of what we had last week where they said they were going to pay only 3.75 percent or allow them to raise their prices 3.75 percent and yet all we keep hearing from the nursing homes is how broke they are going.

SENATOR CLARK: You have 30 seconds left.

SENATOR HIGGINS: I am going to oppose this amendment just on the basis that I don't think these are optional services. I think when you get to be at the age where you don't have any teeth anymore it is nice to have teeth so you can at least eat, or if you don't have glasses and you go blind, I don't consider glasses an optional service. I am wondering why we are picking on just the sick and the infirm, why we aren't looking at any other department in the state and saying, let's do away with some of the services that we pay for there. Medicaid seems to be the only thing that we pick on because it is for the people that don't have any real representation. I hope, Senators, that you will vote against this amendment.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Vard Johnson.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I support Senator Cullan's amendment and I suspect that Senator Higgins will probably support it as well when she knows what the real alternatives are. She got it two minutes ago but she is going to learn the real alternatives because the story simply is this. Medicaid costs skyrocket, and skyrocket and skyrocket. They are difficult to control. Our revenues are remaining relatively constant if not outright declining. Now, the Appropriations Committee had a provision in one of its bills, I think it was 942, I think it was this very bill that would have authorized the Director of the Department of Public Welfare to opt out, to opt out of any of the optional coverages. Now I don't think it is so bad to opt out of the optional coverages but I can guarantee you that before we opt out of the optional coverages I think that is a legislative decision. It ought not to be a decision made administratively. The Cullan amendment simply permits as necessary the Director of the Department of Public Welfare to actually reduce the reimbursements for optional coverages by up to 10 percent. There can in effect be a pro rata reduction. Now that is not