

January 10, 1989

the second year of the biennium. This money is necessary to provide funding levels that will maintain core programs across our state. In addition, my budget recommendations include the dedication of \$300 thousand of revenue and interest earnings to the Technical Community Colleges from the Employment Securities Special Contingency Fund for employee assessment, training, and dislocated worker programs. This will further aid economic development throughout the state. It is my recommendation the avionics program in the Western Community College area be given special consideration for some of the targeted funds. Due to age, condition, and repair costs of the current microwave system it has become necessary to search for another means to provide statewide educational telecommunications services. The most cost effective solution is a satellite system. I am recommending funding to put such a system in place, thus continuing quality, statewide distribution of educational broadcasting. Capital construction costs will be \$1.1 million, with operating costs of \$1.2 million. It is important to note, however, that eliminating the microwave system, and its costs, could provide a payback on this investment in as few as four years. Matching funds have been provided to the ETV Commission to allow Nebraska to participate in a federal grant demonstrating interactive instruction for secondary schools. Nebraska already is a leader in a pilot project. Matching funds will allow the state to utilize a satellite uplink to allow for distance learning in Nebraska schools and schools in 18 other states. I will give consideration to additional funding in this area only after a coordinated plan for Educational Telecommunications Services is completed. Last year you will recall, we increased state aid to education by approximately 9 percent. This budget continues that level for the biennium. At the same time we increase funding for Special Education by \$3.9 million in 1990, and \$9.5 million in 1991. Availability of good books and other resource material enlightens and enriches our citizenry; so I'm recommending that funding for the Library Commission be increased in three areas. These improved library programs will make quality information resources available to our citizens in rural and urban communities across Nebraska. These budget proposals continue Nebraska's strong commitment to education. A \$1.3 million annual increase has been budgeted for the Natural Resources Development Fund, and \$500 thousand more for Soil and Water Conservation Funds. I recommend that the increase in this area be earmarked for critical water quality programs, providing a concentrated effort to stop the effect of erosion and to remove harmful chemicals from our ground water