

reaction was the same as some of the people who have opposed this bill on the floor today and that was I was already involved in hosting foreign visitors to our state, why don't we go ahead and just do it informally like we have been doing. But I can tell you, I got quite a reaction from Senator Marsh who was seated behind me, and I got quite a reaction from former Lieutenant Governor Luedtke who called me, and as I talked with them and talked with Secretary of State Beermann and State Treasurer Marsh, I found that there were, indeed, problems and that the informal arrangement that I had been involved in, while it may work on occasion, that often that informal arrangement results in real embarrassment to our state because of the way that foreign dignitaries are mistreated and the discourtesy that is sometimes inadvertently shown to them. So that is why I changed my position on the bill. I voted for it. I was one of the people that supported its passage last year when it came up for vote again, and it is the primary reason that I have introduced this bill again this session, and I think that if any of the people who are opposing this bill would actually listen to the testimony, talk to Secretary of State Beermann, talk to State Treasurer Marsh, talk to former Lieutenant Governor Luedtke about this, I think they would change their minds, too. I think it is time for the State of Nebraska to advance into the twentieth century as far as our matters of protocol are concerned. I will close with just reading the comment from Secretary of State Beermann's memo because I think he states the case very succinctly. He says, it is no longer a secret that international trade, international exchange, international economics, and international visits are moving to the state or local level. More and more countries and governments are seeking to deal directly with states for a variety of reasons. It is no longer a secret that the international balance of trade is not in our favor. Recent studies and the Governor's recent economic summit very clearly highlight and recommended that Nebraska get involved in the international arena. In that regard, we must begin to plan, coordinate, and establish the mechanics, machinery, and budget for international travel, hosting of international delegation and officials, and we must design an office and officers or establish a protocol office to handle international exchange. This cannot be done on a "default basis or in a haphazard way." We have to become professional and understand the rules of international diplomacy. While Nebraska is poor, we are not cheap. The way we are doing things now, we are cheap and we don't know what we are doing in the international arena. I would ask you to