

leadership qualities. We do have some other programs in Nebraska, and I think they're good programs, like the girls and boys states and, of course, this is mainly...this mainly deals with government. We also have some good 4-H programs. We also have Boy and Girl Scout programs, and these are very good programs of our youth. It tends to help keep our youth in the state after they graduate from college. I feel that a program such as this, and Senator Barrett has explained it very well, it helps build a better quality of life. Many times we hear the bad things about our youth, but they also do a lot of things in our great state. I feel that a program such as this will be an investment in the future. I also think that would help to have a better relationship among the rural areas and the urban areas. Would encourage you to advance this to the next stage of debate.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Schimek, please, followed by Senator Moore.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Mr. President and members of the body, I almost hesitate to take debate time because I can't imagine that this bill is going to be controversial or that anybody would vote against it. But I think I better make certain that I make my argument. I am also pleased to be a co-sponsor of this bill. I'm very enthusiastic about it. As a former teacher, I know that too often too few students receive the opportunities to participate in programs like this. Having, as an adult and as a student, participated in things like girls state and youth council and music programs, I know that there were still students, in my rural high school, who were capable and who did not get the opportunities. One of the things I like particularly about this bill is that for the youth academy it considers students who are at risk and who are not in traditional leadership positions, and I think that is very positive. I also think that a youth academy has the potential for establishing life-long networks, not only between the students and the schools and other students but among the families as well. I think it has potential of bridging the gap not only between rural and urban but in cultural ways as well. And I think that we have a lot of cultural diversity in our state, and that this could help people better appreciate those cultural differences. Regarding the rural-urban exchange, I was fortunate enough several years ago to have a student from Italy in our home for a year, and a student from Switzerland in our home for a month. And recently we had the opportunity to visit both of those students in their homes and I can't tell you what