

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Wesely, followed by Senator Schmit.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. President, members. Just real briefly, I appreciate the Appropriations Committee's work on this issue and, of course, it all seems very familiar to us since we just went through it a year ago. I'm looking forward to Senator Schmit's comments and anticipate some interesting discussion. I just wanted to add a couple of notes of caution. Obviously any additional expenditure for whatever worthy cause does add to the overall costs involved with health care and I'm very concerned about health care costs. We're seeing increases in premiums in a range of 30 plus percent for not only the State of Nebraska state employees, but over where I work at Lincoln Telephone and most of the employers of this state. At some point we need to get a grip on costs and one of the ways we've tried to deal with that is to encourage more outpatient utilization, that that is a cheaper way to go, but what we're finding in many cases is sometimes that this outpatient costs have gone up dramatically. We haven't got the handle we need to on that. Part of the cost expansion is the sort of projects like this that are not only occurring here at the Med Center but in, frequently, in other hospitals. They have moved to expand and enhance and build onto their outpatient facility strength and base, and so where we've tried to move people to the outpatient side of things, we're actually having some trouble getting a handle on that problem and I think obviously we have to be always concerned about the cost of any proposal and it is legitimate to ask questions about this. I do want to commend the committee for the resolution's provisions regarding certificate of need. One of the fights we had last year was are we saying go ahead without certificate of need, are we influencing the process and one of the things I want to emphasize very strongly at this time for the record is that whether we approve or disapprove, and I assume we're going to approve this resolution as we did last year, I would hope that the process we have set in place to try and review the need for this project will go forward with an understanding that they are to do that in the most unbiased fashion possible, that they are the people there to judge whether we need this, whether in Omaha the situation is such that this project is called for, that it is justified, that it is cost effective. That process that we've got in place is there to try and answer those questions. I think we're not able to do that in this Legislature. That is not a function we can serve very well and I think it is