

SENATOR ABBODD: Yes, Mr. President and colleagues, I rise to support and commend Senator Brad Ashford for bringing the amendment in. It has been a bill that needs to get passed right now. As he said, we are currently using about a half of a judge, two and a half judge, with Judge Caniglia, in the court, and it is a situation that if you look at the caseload that has been before the court that Senator Ashford handed out, you can see that there has been an incredible increase in the amount of neglect cases that we have in this particular area, and I think that is really the real tragedy in this entire problem we have been having with the lack of an additional judge there in juvenile court in Douglas County is that you will have children that will be in these neglected homes and the caseload will be such that they won't be able to deal with them in a timely manner. You will have children that will be actually endangered by not having enough judges to deal with the problems. When you have a problem with the child in a home, that child should either be pulled out of the home or the authorities should, at least, examine the home environment for these children and, at the current time, you don't have that ability. The children stay in the homes, even if there is reports of neglect or abuse, sexual or physical and I think that, by providing this additional judge, we will have the opportunity to examine these cases on a faster manner and you won't have days or weeks take place before these neglect and abuse cases are brought before a judge. You will notice since '84, there have been a steady increase in the amount of total court orders from 5,000 to 7,507. I might add that we, at that particular time, in '84, we had an additional judge, an associate judge, Judge Mullen, who is currently on the district court. The problem with the associate judge system was discussed back in '84. I think one of the biggest problems was a lack of accountability, and that is what we currently have in the current system. If you have a judge that is a district court judge or a county court judge and he isn't good or he has some problems, either because of alcohol abuse or whatever they might be, the citizens of this state do have the option to vote that person out of office. They come up for review, and I think that that is one of the big advantages of our current system is that these people can be voted out of office, but with this part-time judge, Judge Caniglia, we don't have that type of accountability. We also have...you'll also note that total petitions have increased by a considerable amount since '84, and the total amount of neglected children has increased from 1984 from 271 to 328 in the past '88 year. I think that this is something that is important. I think that