

spending a lot of time talking to one another. Over the time since I have been in here and as I read the history going back many, many, literally decades prior to my coming here we have attempted, as a Legislature, to get a better handle on how these different groups speak to one another, how we spend our money to get the best bang for the buck, how we create a vision for what higher education should be doing for our state. But we have been unable to act politically because every time we talk about a proposed change, whether it be a change in governance, a strengthening of coordination, a change in role and mission or any of these aspects, we tend to get a reaction from the higher ed community with each sector of higher ed concerned, rightfully so, I don't want to criticize them but they are concerned about how a particular proposal will affect them and their sector so we tend to gridlock on that proposal. It's not because we haven't been told countless times by people that we need to change and do a better job of coordinating. The New Seed for Nebraska project that's been funded through a Kiewit grant and coordinated through the Press Association which attempted to chart the future of our state economically identified a need to do a better job of coordinating higher education and specifically to create a vision on how higher education should be leading our state forward in an economic sense. The Strauss Commission that was appointed by Governor Kerrey a few years ago and did an internal study identified needs to change the governance to do a better job of coordinating higher education. Our own New Horizons project, which we heard a great deal about recently, identified a need to improve the coordination efforts in higher education. I was having a conversation with some people last year in higher education about this and one of the representatives from higher education said, one of the things that we have not done, that people in other states have done, is try to step back one step from the political process, have some...a dispassionate look at our higher ed system and ask some people with some expertise to take that look and make a recommendation for how we should...how we should be changing our higher education system. So what the bill does, it creates a commission of Nebraska citizens to oversee a study. It appropriates dollars. It asks some questions about higher education and it directs that a group of people outside the state be contracted with to carry on a study. That simply is what the bill does. I think it's a good bill. I think it's something that we do need to do. I have an amendment that we'll be taking up in the near future that will add to the specificity of what it is we're look at, so, with that, I will close on my