

North Platte Procurement Office.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. President, and members of the body, today is a much brighter morning, a little fog out there. It's a nice early morning. Went home yesterday feeling a little blue but all of a sudden that old radio song came on, "Don't Worry, Be Happy", and, by golly, I didn't worry and I was happy. And I'm happy this morning. I may need that song again this afternoon but I feel a lot better this morning, thank you. This particular amendment, I believe, is the Procurement Office amendment and the Appropriations Committee did a very reasonable thing when they reduced the funding, in my opinion. But some things have happened. I would like to go through a brief little...little history of that if I can and, certainly, the member of the Appropriations Committee who is going to work with that can correct me if I'm wrong in a couple of areas. I hope not to be. We have, in the State of Nebraska, a western branch office and, yes, it does happen to be in North Platte, Nebraska but if it was in Imperial or Scottsbluff or Chadron, I would be supporting the same thing. It just happens to have been, for the last two years, in North Platte. But this office, what it does is companies...and an example I will use will be a printer, the government, as you can imagine, uses a lot of paper, in fact, I think if you want to destroy the United States, you wouldn't have to use any military weapons, destroy the copy machines within our bureaucracy and we would crumble within minutes. There are a lot of paper, a lot of forms that we have to use. If I were a printer, I would like to get in on that if I could. How can I print some of those forms? And so what happens is companies that try to get into the federal government's bureaucracy of the bidding process get lost. The Procurement Office helps cut through the tape for them, it helps get that done. In Nebraska, we have been very, very successful as over \$10 million worth of contracts over the last few years have been obtained by Nebraska businesses. And, again, that's about \$10 million that is from the federal government that would normally be going to other states so the areas have come to Nebraska. And most of that, in my opinion, is attributed to the effort done by the Procurement Office. The western branch office which takes care of the central and western part of the State of Nebraska, under the Appropriations Committee, was not funded and for, I think, a good reason. The Department of Defense came and said to the State of Nebraska and other states