

SPEAKER BARRETT: Excuse me, Senator Wesely. (Gavel.) Proceed.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, members, we did pass a bill a couple of years ago which blocked the continued use of jails to place emergency protective custody cases in the state. We had problems with the mentally ill being taken and placed in jails. People felt that was the wrong place to take these individuals and so we did pass legislation that would in 1991, January 1 of 1991, stop that practice. In trying to anticipate the service needs then to create an alternative system to deal with these emergency protective custody cases we have developed last year a \$300,000 program in Lincoln for Region V Mental Health Services System, and there we have established out on the Regional Center Campus a protective custody center. That center is underfunded by about \$150,000. They need another \$150,000 to maintain that. The experience there has been a positive one but the cost has been greater than anticipated. We do not have in place in other areas of the state an emergency protective custody system, and there is now developing an approach and planning to deal with that problem. Here is the situation. This year and next year are the times in which we must put into the system the support we need to have the services in place so that these individuals don't have to be jailed, and the committee did add \$300,000 to the 300,000 appropriated last year, so now we are talking about \$600,000. My amendment would increase that by another \$300,000, so we would have \$900,000 into the system, but, ultimately, it is estimated that we need to double that and to have somewhere in the range of 2 to 2 1/2 million dollars in services for these emergency protective custody cases, and that time will come in the very near future when we have to have that system in place. This year and next year are the only times we have to initiate that activity, and so I am basically alerting the body and the committee to consider once again the gravity of the situation. Part of the problem that we have had in this matter is the Department of Public Institutions only submitted a \$300,000 request for funding, and as a result, that is what the committee did support. The Department of Public Institutions should recognize that there is a greater problem here and greater funding is needed, and hopefully we can work with them to recognize that situation. So where we are at is that we have put some funding in. We are starting to deal with this issue, but the time is running out when we need to address the problem completely. We have but two years to do that, and I don't think we are preparing adequately with the money now in the budget to meet