

May 4, 1989

LB 813

number of members would move to amend the bill. (The Peterson, et al, amendment appears on page 2076 of the Legislative Journal.)

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Peterson, please.

SENATOR PETERSON: Mr. President and members, this amendment is a little different than what we have been dealing with on this bill...

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Peterson. (Gavel.)

SENATOR PETERSON: This amendment is a little different than what we have been dealing with before. This amendment doesn't add any money but it does transfer some money. I did not get to visit with all of you and I apologize for that but what this amendment does it reallocates a million three hundred thousand of discretionary money that the Department of Public Institution put into their budget and redirects 565,000 of those funds for the state to open...reopen a 34-bed ward at Norfolk Regional Center and the following year the appropriation is for \$2.3 million, another 535,000 of General Fund money, which would leave 1,735,000 for the second year. It was my understanding last summer on that...and I guess there was some misinformation but we thought that the DPI was going to put this into their budget to open that wing which is very much needed. It makes no sense to have 34 beds sitting, whether at Norfolk or Omaha or at Lincoln, and all we need is funding for staffing which will alleviate part of the problem out there in what we see as a problem. I knew there was a need for...for additional beds, whether it be in Norfolk, Lincoln or Omaha, but I didn't realize how great this was until I got more working in it. Any of you, all you need to do is pick up the phone and call your county attorneys, especially in the bigger counties, talk to the sheriffs or the policemen and you will soon find out the problem is far greater than what I thought it was out there. And the problem is they don't have any place to go with people out there now. Everything seems to be full constantly. There is a need for both additional hospital beds and there is also a need for community half-way houses for people coming out of the hospitals or nursing homes. In DPI's opinion, it seems to be that there is a higher priority for community programs than there is for hospitalization and I'm finding that to be absolutely the opposite after I talked to numerous county attorneys, sheriffs and policemen. There has been overwhelming support, I found,