

comfortable, that they know the person they are talking to, that the person is living within the community, that the person is respected and liked within the community, and they can go and have coffee with the individual, or the individual will travel to all of the towns and have coffee so they know Bob, or Pete, or Sally, whoever it is going to be, and they build a rapport, and when people begin talking, ideas spawn, and they are spawned into growth that can grow into something special, and that contact person then takes that spawning idea and brings it back to Lincoln, and instead of just having a phone call, we have somebody who has been there, who has looked at it, who has talked with the people, who can be a direct liaison that the people know they can trust, and that is a helpful thing whenever a state agency is working with the people of Nebraska. And I will have more to say on the amendment as my light comes on and I give the rest of my time to Senator Schellpeper.

PRESIDENT: You have three minutes left, Senator Schellpeper.

SENATOR SCHELLPEPER: Okay, thank you, Mr. President and members. I would just like to read a little bit of what the purpose of the DED field offices really are. The purpose is to provide a link between Nebraska's rural communities, the Department of Economic Development, and the services of state government. Two of the greatest gaps in rural development are the lack of knowledge at the local level of the forms of assistance available and access to professional staff on an ongoing basis. Of Nebraska's 544 incorporated towns, 80 percent have less than 5,000 people; 78 percent have less than 2,500 people. They are largely rural. They rely upon volunteers to accomplish projects, have part-time government, often no professional staff in the chamber of commerce and rely upon the state to make a positive difference in their development. Personal interreaction and commitment by state government is a key for rural Nebraska. I'd also like to just touch upon why the four locations were actually chosen. The communities of Norfolk, Beatrice, Kearney, and North Platte were centrally located in the proposed field service regions and are the locations of other service providers and institutions of higher education allowing the maximum potential for a coordination of services. The most important point is that the physical location of the office is not as critical as the fact that the field service representatives will be spending the majority of their time traveling their regions working with the communities, local development organizations, the chambers of commerce, and