

not? And only recently has there even been any interest expressed in field offices and that is once again, this telephone lobbying campaign that Senator Baack so thoroughly discussed. And, frankly, Senator Baack, I think you and I have probably just doomed the Panhandle because I don't suppose we'll ever see another penny of money out there from DED apparently because that's kind of the message we seem to be getting is, shut up and quit criticizing us. Well I refuse to be silenced by that kind of heavy-handed tactics and I would reiterate once again that I just don't think that's appropriate for an agency to start calling out and not telling people the full story and laying out the options, as Senator Baack has so adequately explained. Senator Baack has a lot better amendment and a lot better idea for helping rural Nebraska and I'll bet you a dollar when the time comes, DED will be over here opposing that particular amendment. So there isn't, apparently, any real understanding or commitment to doing anything except just fill in a few more positions and spending some more money and we'll see how long that lasts. But I think to support this amendment at this time rewards behavior by an agency that I think is highly inappropriate, puts bad...all communities in a bad spot and I am absolutely offended by the kinds of tactics that have been resorted to here. Aside from that though, let me reiterate. If you want to help small towns, there just simply aren't enough state employees to put one in every town that needs help. There probably aren't enough state employees to put one within 50 miles or 100 miles in every town that needs help. So the only solution seems to me to put training money and grant money out there to help those communities help themselves. Build the expertise in those communities, train those people that are going to stay there. The 800 number, I think that Senator Baack suggested, is a very good idea, but to just put more field offices out there and say, here's our answer to rural Nebraska, we've seen that in the past, it has failed. Senator Wesely has talked about the record of failure and it's very accurate and it's very frustrating. I'd like to have a chance to work with this agency and make something work, and had anybody bothered to come to any of us who are rural senators or who had...had that agency bothered to come to the committee that this Legislature has that Senator Hall and Senator Coordsen chaired over the summer on rural revitalization, we would have been more than happy to join hands with that agency and say, look, we know rural revitalization is a very tough issue, but we're willing to work with you; we think we have some ideas. But was that the way it was done? No. This was just sprung on