

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Wesely, please. (Gavel.) The house is not in order, please.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the sentiment of the body. I am merely for the record trying to outline why we are here today and why I hope we can at least consider the fact that there is good reason not to change the statute. Anyway, in 1985 we had a series of problems in the Department of Economic Development. That was at a time when Governor Kerrey was in office and many of you who suspect that partisanship on my part when I have attacked the Department of Economic Development over the last couple of years, and I can assure you that my displeasure with that department goes far beyond partisanship and is based and rooted in policy and concerns I have with the policy of that department, and in 1985, that department went almost a year without a director. It took CDBG block grants and ignored prioritizations, instead went on a first come, first serve basis, contrary to what had been identified to the communities. It ended up diverting funds and utilizing a number of different flexibilities in their department that infuriated the members of this Legislature. And we said it is obvious the Department of Economic Development is out of control and needs to be looked at, and so we formed an ad hoc special committee on economic development. We looked and worked with the Chambers of Commerce and different interested parties and we came back with a bill, LB 965, as a bill introduced by not only myself, but Senator Landis, and Senator Smith, and Senator Hefner, and Senator Nelson, and Senator Schmit, and Senator Chronister, and Senator Rod Johnson, Senator Beutler, Senator Abboud, Senator Conway, Senator Hoagland, and Senator Withem, and all of us were working together trying to find a way to get some control over the department that had lost its way. And this bill was supported by the business interest of the state because they agreed to us that the department had lost its way, and so we came in to try and identify what are the divisions of the department, what are the goals of the department, how are we going to function so that we don't have these problems repeat itself. So we set up a number of statutory guidelines, signposts, so that the department would not repeat the problems of 1985, and I think we succeeded to some degree to at least provide some structure, some accountability. At the same time, Senator Hannibal and Senator Scofield and other members of the Appropriations Committee divided down the Department of Economic Development budget into those same divisions, so that in the statute we have the