

political. Everything we do in this room is political and don't try to deny that because it is true. So I am going to vote for LB 639, and I hope, and I am going to tell you one more thing. I know of two people, one in my own family, who went to the Department of Economic Development within the last two months to get help because this one person...both of them were starting new businesses. The staff, whomever they talked to, I don't even know, couldn't have been more cooperative, more helpful. These were not big businesses. They gave them all kinds of information and help so they could get started in a new business. So, for that reason and for several others, I am going to vote for the advancement of the bill. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Baack.

SENATOR BAACK: Yes, Mr. Speaker and colleagues, just very briefly, I am not going to disagree with a lot of the history that Senator Wesely and Senator Hannibal have given. There have been problems over there. I will be the first to admit that. I was around in '86 when we worked on that department, and I understand some of the frustrations with some of the things that have gone on in that department. The changes that we are suggesting in 639 are not changes that they just picked out of the air. There was a review committee that was formed. This review committee went through a process of looking at the Department of Economic Development, brought in some national expertise to look at how the department could operate in a much more aggressive, much better fashion. They did that, and these are some of the recommendations they came back with. The department is strapped by some of the things the Legislature has done. I will be just as frustrated as anybody else if we don't see some improvement there, and I can guarantee you that I will be back in to try and put them back under it if that is what it takes to do, but I don't know if that is what it takes. I am willing to take this risk this time, and it is a risk. We are going to take a risk with this. We are going to risk saying let's give them some flexibility. Let's see if they can perform. And so that is something that we are going to have to do this time, but I think the changes that we are making are ones that are going to provide the proper kind of framework. They are not just changes that we were brought out of the air. There was a study done. The changes were recommended. These changes were reflected in LB 639, and I would urge the body to advance 639. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.