

a little time to Senator Doug Kristensen who would like to speak.

PRESIDENT: Senator Kristensen, please, we have about three minutes left.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Peterson, for letting me speak briefly on this. And I think it's important if I can give you some explanation, Senator Peterson, from a perspective that I have had with this. And we really are looking at the saddest cases of people. These people really do not have a lobbyist, they don't have an interest group and these are the people who are the chronically mentally ill people. These aren't the people that go out and drink too much and try to commit suicide and we bring them in for 30 days evaluation. We work on them a little bit, they go back out with a little community support and they're back out in the mainstream. These, truly, are the people who have the most critically and chronically mentally ill needs. And these are people that ordinarily a county has nothing they can do with them. You can't put them in jail. They don't belong in jail. That's not the proper place for them. And, really, what is the system what you do when you come into contact with these people is that you have to find a facility for them. It isn't somebody you can just stick in a home or a foster home and have somebody look after them or look in on them day to day. These are people who need constant care and constant looking after and you just can't go to a regional center like at Hastings. Hastings does a wonderful job. Hastings deals with emergency protective custody, people that you can deal with on a short-term basis, but there is a drastic need for them. Although Norfolk is certainly not in my district and I am certainly probably not going to send many people up there, the people in that area and probably in the Omaha and Lincoln area would use that facility a lot. And in terms of priority, as you look at what society's basic needs are and I think to deal with the chronically mentally ill is one of our most basic needs. I understand this is a continuing expenditure. I understand that that's not very popular and that's something we're trying to avoid for financial reasons. But really what we're trying to deal with is people who can't deal for themselves and who can't take care of themselves and who are extremely mentally ill and it's one thing if we had some other services, but, quite frankly, these 34 beds aren't just for 34 people. These beds are probably going to deal with about 400 individuals during a year and those are