

has said. We all recognize that this is going to be a study, to start off with, to develop and assure continuation of essential service, intrastate kinds of service for commercial air connections, not only within the state, but to hub airports. And we know that this can only have a positive impact on the future of the State of Nebraska, of the economy, services that we all need and so on. What I would like to do is just quickly, and for the record, like to ask Senator Scofield, if she would be willing to answer a question. And, Senator Scofield, I'll kind of outline what I would like to have you respond to in that question. One of the things that I see here is that the South Dakota Airline Authority did look at the concern that they might have to ensure that existing air service within their state would not be jeopardized by any kind of proposal or any kind of new service that they were looking at. And they were looking at the federal essential air service program, and in my understanding there was no problem there, after they had looked at that. But I guess that...And I don't anticipate, personally, any negative impact. In fact, I would expect that this could have a very positive impact and benefit on the well-being of the existing airports and air services within the State of Nebraska that already exist. Would you be willing to respond and expand and clarify that concern for the record and also, I think, for the benefit of those existing airlines that we have within Nebraska. I'll give you the remainder of my time in order to do that. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Scofield.

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Thank you, Senator Smith. First, let me state that I think the continuation of essential air service is absolutely essential to make this whole plan work. That's an important piece of the entire funding mix. South Dakota, in their report in fact, made a special point of working with their Washington delegation so that their existing essential air service funding would not be jeopardized. They met with Department of Transportation members and congressional staff to solicit support for the possibility of securing funding, not only for their project, but also to reiterate their...that their program was not intended to conflict, in any way, with essential air service. We need to continue those kinds of endeavors here in Nebraska. Senator Weihing mentioned, for instance, some of the people out in his area that have worked hard on this. We have a mayor in Scottsbluff that's been a leader in this area. And I would envision bringing those kinds of people in on this.