

does is go a step further on the minimum wage. And this is one amendment to the committee bill which I will support and do support wholeheartedly. I think it's absolutely necessary if we do not want to reduce fairly significantly services which are needed and are already in jeopardy throughout the State of Nebraska. So I, though I'm going against to some extent, I guess, what the committee has done by not putting this in, I still think this is absolutely needed and I will...I will vote yes on this amendment. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Smith, would you like to close on your amendment, please.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank all those folks who stood to support this amendment and spoke so kindly on behalf of the elderly people of the State of Nebraska and for this amendment. And I do want to restate that I do appreciate the fact that the Appropriations Committee at least looked favorably to the degree that they felt that they could at that point in time, not having the information about the minimum wage increase. But remember that the original request was for \$1.5 million and so, with this \$255,000, what we're doing is just asking for enough money to cover what the federal cut was, which will become effective in July of this year, and also for the minimum wage increases. There are no new services attached to this request. I would like to read just a part of a news release that was put out by the Nebraska Association of Area Agencies and it came from Lincoln from Jim Zitlow, who is a director in this area agency located in Lincoln, Lancaster County, excuse me. And I would like to just expand a little bit upon what Senator Hall said when he talked about costs. We're not talking here about being able to cover costs. They're going to have to be talking about reducing services if this money is not given to us. Each area agency covers a group of counties and develops an area plan budget for coordinated programs specific to the area. Over 60,000 elderly Nebraskans, most age 75 plus, use the programs annually, according to reports filed with the Department on Aging. This comes from Jim's report. Then he goes on to say, the only way I see to prevent heavy service reductions in local programs is for the State Legislature to cover the federal cut on top of normal program maintenance costs, said Jim Zitlow, Chairman of the Nebraska Association of Area Agencies on Aging. User contributions already exceed what the state puts into community aging services. These people, the oldest and the neediest, have had