

SENATOR HABERMAN: Mr. President, the first item I would like to bring up is the social service delivery system in southwest Nebraska. During the interim, I asked for help from the attorneys and the judges in the southwestern Nebraska social services delivery system and here are some of their replies. I have the letters if you would like to read them. The one judge stated, "I criticize the present social service delivery system for its bureaucracy, overspecialization, inability to respond to human needs, lack of continuity of care and failure to support its own workers. Today social services changes were made in the name of efficiency and the dollar saving and it is neither. This policy ignores the needs and desires of the local communities." The judge wrote, "Some specific problems are a young boy with alcoholic problems was placed in an alcoholic foster home." A boy with an alcoholic problem was placed in an alcoholic foster home. Over 100 percent turnover in child protective services workers. Well trained and loyal employees have been driven from their jobs, no local foster homes for emergency placements. Another judge says, "In my opinion, the department has made little effort to adequately deliver services in our small communities." Another judge stated, "I am particularly concerned about recruitment, training and supervision of foster parents and the general problem of delivery of services in rural areas." Another attorney stated, "I have dealt with social services here in southwest Nebraska for over nine years and it seems it gets more and more frustrating with the system. It seems that no one can get a straight answer from them or any sort of plan together for dealing with the problem." Another attorney wrote, "A caseworker did not appear at a hearing. When I called her it was apparent there was considerable confusion as to who was handling the case and which office was responsible for it." Another attorney wrote, "In a number of cases, I felt the department has done whatever appeared to be the easiest for them rather than what was in the best interests of the children and their parents." Another attorney wrote, "I have received complaints from individuals concerning the manner in which the department conducts its investigation and further complaints concerning the manner in which the department responds to the needs and wishes of the family. Specifically, I have received complaints concerning where the children are placed." A county sheriff wrote, "The local Civil Service office which I have dealt with for many years, of which functioned very well and had qualified workers, no longer seems to have such and has to go through the McCook office to get workers and (inaudible) to act.