

January 31, 1991 LB 58

question that should be explored in light of the tight economic times. It would make sense to know how much money we're spending on people who perhaps don't need the money. And maybe we can focus our services on those who actually need the money or take some of the money and transfer it to something else where we need the money more. We need to be looking, I think, now, in the next couple of years, at areas where we can cut back without essentially hurting our citizens. And this amendment asks the department to make a report which potentially could be the basis for making some changes in the Department of Aging. That's all it does. I would ask for your support.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Beutler. I'll now recognize Senator Wesely, followed by Senator Smith. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Madam President, members of the Legislature, I would rise in support of the amendment by Senator Beutler. Senator Beutler and I have discussed this. The two focuses of his amendment, the first dealing with confidentiality, reconfirms what we think is already the case. The Legislature has and should continue to have access to information, in our oversight function, from the Department of Aging. This bill does provide some restrictions to access to records. But we had assumed that we would still continue to provide information to the Legislature. This just clarifies that that is indeed the case. In addition, the other more substantive part of his amendment deals with the desire to better target and focus aging services to those elderly Nebraskans in greatest need, economically, for that assistance. Senator Beutler has already gone through his rationale for that. I think it's a reasonable rationale. We are, at this point, uncertain about the flexibility we have in aging service programs, because of the federal mandates involved with these programs, as to how far we can go toward trying to prioritize them in terms of economic need and having means testing in place for these programs. So we, at this point, think the appropriate step to take would be to review, through the local area agencies, the situation in terms of their programs and who they intend to serve, and how they intend to meet this economic and social need criteria set out in the bill, taking those area agency plans, drawing them together through the State Department of Aging, reviewing those and reviewing the federal mandates that are involved, and then reporting back to the Legislature this fall so we might know what our options are in this area. We are unable, at this time, to understand the details of the