

51. We will proceed with consent calendar, LB 284.

ASSISTANT CLERK: LB 284 was a bill that was introduced by Senator Landis. (Read title.) The bill was read for the first time on January 15, was referred to the Revenue Committee. They report the bill to General File.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Hall.

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Madam President. LB 284 was introduced by Senator Landis, who had to be out of the state today. The bill deals with the Community Development Assistance Act. It is a total rewrite of the act, but it only changes the act in a couple ways. The first is that it specifically authorizes donations. And maybe what... Maybe I should back up a little bit and tell you about the act. The act allows private contributions to be made to nonprofit community betterment organizations. One of the changes that we make is to allow for those contributions to be made directly to cities and counties so that there is no need to establish that not for profit organization. In many of the smaller communities it's a much more efficient way to handle that. The second change is that the criteria that is currently used to determine whether or not an area is eligible, in other words whether or not they have the economic loss in order to be eligible for this program. Those criteria used in the past have not been readily available again, especially as you get into the smaller communities. What we do is we change the five criteria, use criteria that are available to a community rather readily; they are average unemployment, vacant housing, and crime, depressed valuation, and the median family income, per capita below the state average. Those are the criteria that are used in the bill as it makes the change. And, thirdly, the last change that it would make to the act would... that... under the present situation you are only eligible, as a community or as a group, betterment group, to apply for these funds during a 45-day window, throughout the year. What the bill would allow is that the application for this program be made throughout the year, annually, 365-days a year. But what happens is that there would be a 45-day turn around, a 45-day window in regard to response to that application. With that, Madam President, there are no other changes to the act. It remains at approximately a quarter of a million dollar program that is available and is out there, it has been used, Pawnee City and Omaha, Lincoln, Scottsbluff, and other projects throughout the state. The projects range from as