

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Pirsch, just a couple of questions, if I may, to get a little better perspective. Senator Pirsch.

SPEAKER BAACK PRESIDING

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Pirsch, would you please respond to a question from Senator Beutler?

SENATOR PIRSCH: Yes, Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Just, I'm a little out of touch with what is happening with hearing officers these days and how it is being handled administratively. I know historically they've usually been attorneys or almost always have been attorneys. Are there areas of the law where we're moving away from using attorneys as hearing officers, or is this a unique situation?

SENATOR PIRSCH: Well, I'm not sure this is a unique situation. As you know, through the years we have refined, and I have helped refine the crime victim's reparations. The first couple of years I think you complained and I introduced a bill that changed the separate Crime Victim's Reparation Board under the Nebraska Crime Commission which saved us administrative costs. Then we eliminated the three-member board who were getting \$100 per day to hear these claims and made them a committee of the Nebraska Crime Commission, also saving a great deal of money. What...the criteria that is used for crime victims reparations is very clearly stated in the law and there are just certain criteria that have to be followed and that's all there is to it. The executive director, of course, is very familiar with the law. When you work in this area and time after time follow that same set of procedures, I don't think that requires a lawyer particularly and indeed I think that's part of the time consumed when a lawyer comes in from the cold you might say, has to look at the law and then apply it to the claim. Again, the claim is brought in, goes through several steps which are clearly outlined in the law. The acknowledgement letter, of course, is a form letter and requests for any omitted information is simply a staff person looks through and does that. The investigation of the claim is started by the staff and they do have a staff that investigates the claims and if more investigative reports are needed, then they even send them to an investigative agency. Then after that information is all compiled, the summary of the claim and the investigation is prepared, duplicated and forwarded to a hearing officer for determination. Now at that