

try and find some solutions to the problem. The dilemma is this, we now have, as Senator Lindsay mentioned and others have, the ability to save or, could be put, prolong lives in a way we never could envision, even months ago, let alone years ago. New technologies, new procedures, new ways in which we help people with their medical problems have come onto the marketplace in an unbelievable fashion of late. So we have this ability to save and prolong lives, but do we have the ability to pay for it, because those new procedures and technology have a cost attached to them. They have a benefit but they have a price tag, and as we have seen the cost of health care skyrocket to a point now where in Nebraska we are spending \$4 billion a year amongst us, \$4 billion a year which far eclipses the amount we spend on our state budget, which is about a billion and a half dollars. It is obviously eating away at businesses and the cost that they have of providing health insurance. It is eating away at the budget, as we are facing a Medicaid dilemma and shortfall here in our own state budget. It is a problem that is in Nebraska finally coming to the forefront, though it has been building now for quite some time. In Oregon, they've decided the way to deal with this problem is to examine what is the best use of these technologies and resources that we have, and what is less effective use. And they are setting up a series of procedures, several hundred of them, and ranking them as most cost efficient and least cost efficient, and then they are saying we are going to pay down to a certain level, and below that level, we aren't going to provide those services to our citizens under Medicaid. Now this is of controversy and there is still yet to be the formal ability to adopt this plan, but we, obviously, have to recognize that the concept of rationing health care is coming forward as an issue to be discussed and considered. And the rationing of health care is a concept that, obviously, we have all heard of, but I am warning you will be upon us soon because this crisis of health care is worsening. And so I know there are those in Nebraska who are suggesting that this is the time to start considering how we do that. Well, I am not here...

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR WESELY: ...to propose or suggest that rationing is the way to go because what you are doing there is as a society saying we are going to cut you off and make a decision as to what you are able to do or not able to do. And maybe we will reach that point at some point, but I am sure not ready to take that step now, although it does happen in a guarded sense and a