

PRESIDENT MOUL: The committee amendments are adopted. I'll now recognize Senator Nelson for opening on the bill.

SENATOR NELSON: Madam Speaker, we had a lot of discussion on this bill or a considerable amount last year. What some of you may remember is the bill to discontinue the Youth Leadership Academy and the program. The program was run considerably different last year than the prior year. Prior years there was \$240,000 allocated to it. I think, and from memory, about 140,000 or 135,000 spent in that year. Some of the expenditures were very, very questionable, all of us, from food to bus service and the accountability, the follow-up and what this program is designed to do is supposedly reach students that are at risk in each and every one of our districts. None of us can really describe what students are at risk. To me maybe one thing and to someone else may not be. I'm not out here to hinder or to do anything against helping any of the students in the State of Nebraska. However, this is a time that we have to question, I think we have to assess better what we're spending our money for and what the end results are. Last year, because of the difficulty that we encountered the prior year, the body saw fit to allocate \$30,000. Of that 25,933 were used. Might I tell you that two students were eligible in every district in the State of Nebraska. There were only 58 students that were even interested enough in the program to participate. Schools did not return information forms or no eligible nominees from the district and for a number of reasons. Some senators did not even bother to return the nomination forms. I think that this program, we can't do anything for early education, we can't do anything for retraining teachers. I can go down the aging programs, I can go down through the list and probably find 50 programs that we're not able to fund. We changed this to the research analyst to do the work. One analyst worked approximately four months last year on this particular project. I would have to say that we have specialized staff. I think that they have a lot more to do. They are there to do research. They, themselves admitted they were not trained in this handling of a project like this. They were not trained in necessarily handling kids at night. Between the swimming pools and the activities that young kids get away from home that they may or may not like to do. I have some suggestions if the program is continued that it move away from the Research Department. It's simply to take staff, one's full-time staff for about four months, an additional staff off and on for three or four weeks to me is not wise use of the taxpayers' money. My question, was