

PRESIDENT MOUL: The amendment is adopted. Anything further on the bill, Mr. Clerk?

CLERK: I have nothing further on the bill, Madam President.

PRESIDENT MOUL: I will remind the senators the house is under call. Senators, please check in. Senator Robak and Senator Robinson, please check in. Is there anyone who wishes to speak to the bill, itself? Seeing none, do you wish to close, Senator Ashford?

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Madam President. I would just remind the body where we are in this bill as amended. First of all, as you recall from yesterday, this bill calls for mediation in domestic relations cases where custody is at issue. With the amendments, the bill now stands as follows. First of all, the mediation is triggered upon the application of both parties to the dispute. The committee amendments which had provided for mediation upon the request of one of the parties is no longer in the bill. I would have preferred the prior but I think that even with that amendment we still have a bill that is very worthy of passage, and I will tell you why. Essentially, the central focus of this bill is the parenting plan. For the first time now in Nebraska law, we will be following several other states that have adopted the concept of parenting plans in domestic relations cases involving custody. The parenting plan is a significant advancement in the Nebraska law of domestic relations because it requires both parties to the dispute to think of the other parties to the dispute who are not actually before the court, that being the children, and it provides for a mechanism whereby the parties who, yes, may be warring factions, can sit down and discuss not their own problems as far as whether or not they are going to get back together again, or how they are going to deal with each other, but how they are going to deal with their children, and that is an initial, significant advancement in Nebraska law. And I know Senator Kristensen and I and Senator Abboud, that try a lot of these cases, know how difficult these cases can be, and Senator Lindsay, who also tries a lot of these cases, and I am sure would like to try more of them. But I think that the adoption in this statute of the parenting plan concept is something very significant. I noticed that in looking back at some of the experience of other states, the California experience, for example, adopted, to start out with adopted voluntary mediation, Senator Rasmussen reminds me,