

rather than to take any more of your time.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you very much, Senator Landis, that is very much appreciated. All in favor of the committee amendments signify by saying aye, or by voting aye, opposed vote nay. Record.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 25 ayes, 0 nays on the adoption of committee amendments.

SPEAKER WITHEM: The committee amendments are adopted. Senator Vrtiska, to open on your bill.

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I guess I need to take a little bit of time because I think this is an important piece of legislation. I would like to certainly at this time take a little time to tell you what actually LB 144 will do, the Partnership for Economic Development Act, and then I'll take a little bit of time, if you don't mind, in my opening to discuss some of the things that I...about the bill that have certainly been brought up before and then I will attempt to answer any questions that anyone might have. The Partnership for Economic Development was put together by a working group and originally we had about 100 people who gathered together at a meeting to discuss the idea of economic development and what could be done further for the purpose of carrying forward on this type of a project. There were representatives of the Economic Development Association, development districts RCs and Ds, postsecondary schools, community action agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, utility companies, Center for Rural Affairs, Department of Economic Development and other senators who indicated their interest in this area of economic development. Governor Nelson was very interested in what we were doing and we formed a partnership of our own as we were able to take what the group was talking about and bounce it off of him and his staff as we formed this proposal. LB 144 directs the DED to provide grants to collaborative applicants comprised of communities, counties, agencies, economic development providers such as development districts in RCs and Ds and private corporations and entities. The aim of these grants would be to meet the needs identified in Section 2 of the bill which are to stimulate local development efforts statewide, engage in more effective economic development, strengthen the ability of rural communities and counties to develop economic development plans through