

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Maurstad. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Madam President, members of the body, Senator Maurstad is amending the substitute amendment that the body adopted a few minutes ago that Senator Vrtiska and I and others had comprised, agreed upon and certainly, Senator Maurstad is being very up front as he stated all along that he would try to strike this section. However, I would like to point out that this is a program that we have no idea what projects are out there. We have no idea what exactly people are going to do. No one can give any particular example on it and so what my concern was, this section that was in there that Senator Maurstad is trying to strike, my concern was that we not simply provide \$250,000 for some...Beatrice or North Platte or in Omaha or Lincoln or whomever, so they could get a large grant monies because many of these areas are very organized and they can come in very quickly and find another way. This would be another way for them to receive funds. The real focus of this bill, my understanding, Senator Vrtiska, is the real focus of this bill is to try to get into the areas that have not traditionally done a good job of economic development, trying to get into the areas that have not necessarily done a good job of organizing. So we put the \$250,000 cap for two reasons. Number one, I don't trust DED on rules and regs, Senator Maurstad, and in upcoming years I think you'll understand the body's reluctance to do that, so I don't necessarily trust them to do it on rules and regs, but number two, \$25,000 puts at least 10 programs out there that will be geared for the areas that have not been highly developed or need help in developing. If you don't put a cap on it, the chances are that some of the communities that do have a lot of development will suck up a lot of the funds and we will not...we will simply be putting monies where we always have before and I don't think that's a good idea. The third reason I oppose the Maurstad amendment is simply the fact that we don't know for the most part if this is going to be a good program or not. Let's find as many different sites out there as we can to get a good read. I am very uncertain as to, if we don't put a cap on it, where the money actually will go. My fear is it's not going to go in the areas that we'd like for it to go. So I urge the body to reject the Maurstad amendment.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Bernard-Stevens. The Chair