

I want to speak from personal experience. What Senator Beutler is saying is absolutely true. A guardian ad litem usually is a lawyer. The Latin phrase ad litem refers to litigation. Ad is a preposition either to or for, and litem is the same word that we get the word litigation from. So guardian ad litem is appointed for the purpose of litigation, primarily to represent the legal rights of a minor. At the present time I'm a court ad litem for a young boy who was subject to abuse, and he is with a family in Arizona. If this law were in effect it would greatly increase the cost either to the court or to the Department of Social Services, the family in question could not afford even my plane ticket to send me to Arizona. I've been guardian ad litem of this child for about three years. I have seen him only once when he returned to Nebraska for a visitation. It's possible for a guardian ad litem to perform a lot of the duties that are referred to in this act. Actually, what this bill does is attempt to outline the duties of a conscientious guardian ad litem. And in that respect I think it lists a lot of noble purposes, but Senator Beutler is absolutely correct in saying that it expands greatly the role of the mandated duties of a guardian ad litem. I refer you to Section 2(b) in which it says a guardian ad litem is not appointed to defend the parents or other custodians of the protected juvenile, but shall defend the legal and social interests of the juvenile. And then it goes on to define social interests shall be defined generally as the usual and reasonable expectations of society for the appropriate parental custody and protection of quality of life for juveniles without regard to the socioeconomic status of the parents or other custodian of the juvenile. This expands the traditional role of the guardian ad litem and would rather greatly increase the expense in a proceeding of this type. There may be instances where this is necessary or advisable, but I do not think that we can list an agenda for a court appointed guardian ad litem, and this is best left to the court to determine what needs to be ordered, and also to the professional responsibilities of the people appointed to be guardian ad litem. So I would have to oppose both the amendment and the bill and urge you to give considerable consideration to the points brought out by Senator Beutler. I see Senator Chambers coming into the Chamber. I ask him if my definition of ad litem was reasonable, and I don't know whether he's checked me out on that or not. I'll find out and ask him to advise me. Thank you.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Matzke. The Chair