

final component of what is needed to either expand an existing small business in our state or locate a new one, so I hope as we continue the discussion we keep the principal intent of this bill in mind. Earlier we were talking about the \$6 million was too much money for this and now it appears we're having a discussion that this is not enough money, so we've kind of gone full circle. The Economic Development Department tries to do the best job it can in spreading the limited funds that we have for these types of projects to those that are worthy. As I indicated earlier, there's about \$7.5 million available to the state to use for economic development efforts through the community development block grant and they have three to four times that amount in requests every year. I think they will use this the same way that they use the CDBG program and that's to maximize its use. And I want to point out that the top grant limit on community development block grant project is \$500,000. So I think that that might put aside sometimes the aura that is developed that we just have these huge economic development packages put together for the small business growth that is occurring in the State of Nebraska and has occurred the last five years. So I think this is an appropriate amount of money. I like the provisions that Senator Wickersham has put in his amendment. I think that the loans and the grants with the check and balance that is built into this bill by the commission and the Governor's involvement, I think will ensure that the dollars are used appropriately. They will obviously be held accountable for those so I would once again just encourage support of the Wickersham amendment.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator. Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Madam President, Senator Maurstad made a very interesting observation about going full circle. Senator Maurstad, I'm not saying there is not enough money in this program, I'm saying that with the amount of money in the program they are allowing businesses too large to participate. I think that businesses hiring 100 or more employees will come closer to being able to scrap against the big fellows and ladies than the little ones will be in a position to scrap against them and here's what I'm saying. I think those with 100 and more employees should be bumped up into that category of the larger firms and this fund, if it's to be done, should be restricted to the smaller enterprises that cannot compete with those larger operations. If you give money to the bigger operation you're helping the competition which is able to crush out the smaller