

SENATOR BEUTLER: Well, I think...well, okay, but...

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: But the concept is there and if we can use that for discussion of at least some of the concepts, I would appreciate that and maybe some others would. And to the extent that if there's some other provisions that we can do to work on that, yes.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Beutler. On the Beutler amendment, Senator Maurstad. Senator Lindsay.

SENATOR LINDSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members, Senator Beutler's amendment, I guess, may still have some validity with or at least what he's envisioning and that is the question of whether we should still allow counties to opt out of the statewide program and allow them then to get, with the Beutler amendment, some portion of the state funding or a proportionate share of the state funding, come back to that county to assist in their...in their defense. Douglas County, right now, spends over \$1.2 million on public defense. And I should point out that, under the terms of this, some of the funds that...things that are tied on or tied into the distribution of funds are complying with different standards that are set. Those standards, for example, one of those is the caseload standards which I believe Nebr...Douglas County right now has 27 public defenders or assistant public defenders. Those standards, I believe, suggest that they should have 55 to comply with the adequate standards, and that, I think, is a laudable goal but I don't think it's anything that's been discussed out here. I think that if we're...if we...we should be real careful that we know what we're doing here and that what we're getting our counties into because there's other terms in the bill that, for example, that says those funds that you get back, the funds that you get from the state cannot be used to supplant your existing budget. They cannot be used to pay for...you're already paying for it, they have to be used in addition to your existing budget. So what these dollars you're talking about are to add people to your staff, not to pay for those that you already have. So I think there's an awful lot of things in the bill that I would hope that the Beutler amendment is just the first so that we can make sure that we understand what we're getting into, because, as I mentioned, it's a system that I have a problem with because I just...I simply don't think it's going to work because we don't...we won't give the money we need to make