

all our children will get taken care of or everybody will get taken care of if they're sick. When it comes to a crisis situation, yes, they can be taken care of. They can go to a hospital and they will be accepted and we pay for it, in many cases, as the taxpayers of Nebraska. This may be a way to get in preventative measures to help these people before it reaches this crisis stage. The state is going to have to fill in the vacuum that has been left by the federal government. There is no two ways about it and that's what we're looking at. There is no way we can do it quickly and that's part of the point of starting now and looking at the ways to do it. Both Senator Beutler and I introduced legislation that dealt with insuring the children of Nebraska. Both of us knew neither of these bills were really ready to come out on the floor, but again the point was, let's start discussing it and let's start looking at how we can solve this problem. There are somewhere in the neighborhood of 50,000 children in the State of Nebraska who do not have health insurance. This is where we're trying to talk...this is what we're trying to talk about. These are some of the people that at least I'm trying to target, to begin with, and that's the children. I have had phone calls over my two...I guess three years now down here that have been very frustrating because they have been women, usually single women who have a fair paying job, a living wage job, but health insurance is not included or they have a chronically ill child and there is medication that is required every month, or treatment that is required every month, and I've sat down with several of them and we've gone over their budget. I made phone calls. I've tried to find help for them. Do you know what I've had to tell them in the end? The best thing for you is to quit your job and go on welfare. That's what is wrong with our system and we have to do something about it. I wished I had the answer right now and I wish we could pass something that would take care of all of it at this time, but I don't think we do. This language merely starts us in the direction of dealing with a problem we have to deal with. I will tell you right now, I do not think welfare reform will be as successful as it could be in this state if we don't take on this problem and start looking at it and find a solution to it within the next three or four years. So with that again, I stand in opposition to the Witek amendment and hope that we will defeat it. Thank you.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Day. Senator Dierks.

SENATOR DIERKS: Thank you, Madam President and members of the