

SENATOR WITEK: Madam Chairman, members of the body, I hope people have taken the time to read on page 5 of the section that we're discussing. It says it is the intent of the Legislature that by July 1, 1999 health insurance should be available to all citizens of Nebraska. The Governor should develop a plan to accomplish this goal. The plan should have an initial priority health insurance access for children and youth. A report shall be made annually to the Legislature on or before January 1st of each year as to the progress that has been made in achieving the goal. While it is the intent of the Legislature that all Nebraskans have access to affordable health insurance, the plan should be developed to provide for health insurance for as many Nebraskans as possible. Many of the points Senator Maurstad just made are some of the points that I've written down to make. You've stood up, many of you, and said you've been putting in bills on this certain topic and you've been bringing forth ideas on how to deal with it. Why are we, the Legislature, then instructing the Governor to put together a plan if we're already doing that? Why are we...the cost of doing something like this and staff time, this is a decision that should be made by the Governor's Office if he wants to. He is instructing his own Lieutenant Governor to have this as her number one priority on health care. These are already things he is doing. We don't need to have this in the intent language of our welfare reform bill. We don't need to be telling the Governor to go out and put together a plan because he is already involved in that. We're already involved in that. This is redundant language on what is already being accomplished. Outside of the fact that we're saying it's the intent of the Legislature that by...we're putting a time limit on it, by July 1, 1999 that health insurance should be available to all Nebraska citizens. We already have health insurance available to all Nebraska citizens. And, yes, sometimes it is expensive and it is expensive for my family but we've made adjustments, like Senator Maurstad said, to be able to afford our health insurance. And people that you're taking money from to continue this bureaucratic government reform that the liberals on this floor keep pushing down our throats that the American public said overwhelmingly they're tired of it, they want to do away with it, just last November, you continue to do this because you say that this is what you want or this is what you wish. Well, people like myself who I would consider are at the lower middle class or the near poor or people who are what you want to call middle class, I feel that I've come in to represent a lot of those people because you're taking money from us to redistribute