

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Madam President. All I've got to say is Senator Chambers certainly puts a different spin on this thing, and I guess I need to go back and talk about there is a section in the law that says that counties have the responsibility in case of sickness, that the counties shall furnish temporary assistance to such person that it shall deem necessary. I want to go back to the model that was...that we developed this past summer in dealing with the indigent people, a model that was developed by NACO and the Department of Social Services, and I think it was originally developed back in 1984, and I think 75 counties in the state now use that, and it, basically, says exactly what is being said in LB 455, and that is it requires the applicant to help the worker develop plans to alleviate the need for assistance and prohibits benefits for those whose loss of income is a result of voluntary action and those who refuse suitable employment. And that's, basically, what LB 55 (sic) is telling us, that they can be refused at the state level, and if they are refused at the state level, they can't be then turned to the counties except in those extreme cases where there is sickness and other reasons where the counties can step in and provide some assistance. I am still trying to find in the section of law that Senator Wesely alluded to that says that the first duty of the county shall be to care for the indigent, and I haven't been able to locate that yet. But if I do, I will certainly bring it...I will certainly bring it to you. The only other thing I want to reiterate, and that is based under the present indigent assistance plan that's across the State of Nebraska, there is a variance in the amount of funding and the requirements to be eligible for assistance, and some of those are less stringent than others. And one of the things that the 508 committee tried to resolve this past summer in our deliberations was to try to get some continuity between the various counties and the requirements they have in order for people to be eligible. If that could, in fact, happen, then everybody would be playing on a more level playing field, and it wouldn't be so apt for people from one county to go to another simply for the purpose of getting a better...better assistance than they could get in some counties. The way that I read the statutes, and I'm not a lawyer, the way I read them right now is that the, as I said earlier, the counties have the right to refuse benefits to those whose voluntary action has them...makes them lose their income and, therefore, they, in fact, lose their eligibility to ask for assistance from the county. Again, I support the...at this point, at least, I support the Hall amendment. Thank you.