

amendment, although I think, again, she has hit upon a very key issue. This is LB 684, if you look in your bill book, you will see the committee heard the bill and killed it six to zero. It wasn't that we didn't acknowledge that what she was making was a legitimate point, but the main thrust of her amendment is to delay the implementation of this welfare reform for six months until January 1 of next year. We did not want to delay further moving forward with the reform. But we did acknowledge the fact that she is exactly right about the need to be sensitive to the private agencies and the impact on welfare reform on those private agencies. That's why, in the committee amendments, we do...we did adopt that the Department of Social Services shall establish an Advisory Committee comprised of representatives of nonprofit agencies who provide services to low income citizens in Nebraska. The advisory group may also include interested members of the public and it shall exist for three years after the operative date of this section. So we want to have this Advisory Committee carry out the functions that were delineated in this amendment and in LB 684, that is to have the private sector agencies telling the department what they're seeing and what they're having to respond to as we move forward with welfare reform. So we could be...if Senator Crosby wanted to put more specific types of intent with that Advisory Committee we establish with the committee amendments, that would be something that I would find interesting and be supportive of. But the delay aspect, again, I feel like we need to move forward on the actual implementation. Now let me talk on a broader level about the implications of what Senator Crosby is talking about because she is hitting upon exactly what's happening with this whole issue across the country. Currently, poverty and caring for our poor is an entitlement at the federal level. The federal government, back to the days when ADC was born, Roosevelt administration, where we said in partnership of the states that our national government will entitle the poor to assistance. Again, the levels of assistance, the standard of need, those sort of things are all determined by the state legislatures, but there is a federal match for every dollar that we put in, so that they are there backing us up and actually putting in more money than the state does to try and help the poor. So the federal role has been a very, very important one in the issue of poverty until this year when we're seeing the House advance a proposal that would, in their terms, devolve the responsibility for poverty to the state level. They want to take the federal government out of the entitlement business of caring for the poor and give the responsibility to the states.