

SPEAKER WITHEM: Would typically recognize the sponsor of the bill to give a brief review of the bill, after we haven't been on a measure for a few days. Is Senator Kristensen here? I understand that Senator Kristensen will be here momentarily. Senator Kristensen.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that you requested a short review of the bill of where we are at, is that correct?

SPEAKER WITHEM: That is correct.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Thank you. Members of the Legislature, LB 646 is the County Revenue Assistance Act and deals with the issue of indigent defense and the payment of that indigent defense. As you realize, and as we have known and discussed before, that Nebraska is one of six states in the United States that does not have the state picking up some costs of indigent defense. Indigent defense is, of course, those defendants who are charged with crimes who, by the requirement of the United States Supreme Court, dating back to the early 1960s, requires that if they cannot afford legal representation, that the state or county must pay for that, and we pick up the bill in this state, that is done entirely by property tax. LB 646 is designed to alleviate that to some measure. We spend roughly \$10 million in this state on indigent defense. This bill is designed, and I have an amendment that has been adopted, that put it all into state funding, but not money going to the counties, only a staff of attorneys that will come in and be of assistance, either trial, postconviction relief, or an appeal, that will attempt to take the burden off and sort of act as an insurance policy. So 646 is now, in its form, a state-funded, not dollars going to the counties, but services going to the counties. There will probably be a staff of four or five attorneys that will be eligible to help out counties. Senator Beutler has an amendment, that we are dealing with right now. To give you an overview, after we deal with his amendment, then I have an amendment that, basically, addresses the concerns that Senator Lindsay and Senator Hall raised last week, and then Senator Hartnett has an amendment. Then Senator Hall, once he's wanted to move the State Capitol to Kearney, and then Senator Chambers has a little amendment onto the bill as well. And I think that procedurally we are on the committee amendments, and we are currently debating Senator Beutler's amendment, and I