

is being paid 68 percent of what it costs to maintain the people who are served in human services. Some counties are getting 100 percent, some counties 85. Got a bill in the Appropriations Committee now, I will remind you of it, hopefully, it will come out, that will provide that we are going to have some kind of equity, and we are going to begin it at 80 percent, knowing full well we can't afford to provide immediate equity for everybody. I am not sure if it is going to make it through the Appropriations Committee, but keep that in mind as you consider this bill, a bill that will provide legal services for those counties that can't afford it. You know, even the large counties that are making up the difference because of the absence of how money is distributed through DPI for our local service programs, not only to the public but to the private agencies as well, that that relates to property tax. What we don't distribute fairly from the Department of Public Institutions back to the six regions in the state comes out of property tax. What some counties are able to spend because they have to for public defense is no different from those that can't afford it, the defense is still necessary in there. So that is why I was happy to hear Senator Warner talk about the equity and the need for us to be fair, but all I want to remind you all is that we are going to have to do that; if we are going to do that in this case, we are going to have to do that as it involves human services. Won't get into all the rest of them. We are never going to achieve full equity, but where there is a social responsibility to defend somebody or to prosecute somebody, as the case might be, I am not sure, we certainly have that same responsibility as it applies to people with disabilities, people who are now on the waiting list. It is up to about 1,600 now. Think about that. And that responsibility has to be met. I think we ought to be able to afford do it now at 100 percent and cut back on some other things we really don't have to spend the money on. It is a matter of priorities. I don't know what the cost of this is going to be. At the present time, I lean towards supporting Senator Beutler's amendment because it would give that option to counties who now are managing the responsibility of, and it is a difficult issue, indeed. I certainly, as an old county commissioner, understand the problem Richardson County has, and for a long time Pawnee County has had. My good friend, Senator Vrtiska, represented county that was at the brink for many years...

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.