

opt out?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Well, Senator, I wouldn't expect that any of the counties in your district would opt out because this is so clearly beneficial for them.

SENATOR JONES: Thank you. That is just what I was trying to figure out, if they would opt out, they'd be probably history then, I suppose. It would just about break them probably. Anyway, thank you.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Well, they have existed for 150 years somehow.

SENATOR JONES: Okay.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Elmer.

SENATOR ELMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, members, in listening to the debate here, it reminds me of a bill I had before Government earlier this year in which we said that since criminal defenses and criminal prosecutions always begin saying the people of the State of Nebraska versus, that the State of Nebraska's people are the people responsible for taking these prosecutions and their defense through the court systems. I feel like that this is one of the things that are mandated by the state upon the counties to fund, and it is proper that the state should pay for these. And in order for it to work, we would have to have it be statewide and include all counties. Now the mechanisms to do that are up for debate, but if we want to truly equalize and truly manage the prosecutions and the defenses of people in criminal proceedings, we need to look at these kinds of things. There has occurred circumstance in our counties with low populations, very tight budgets, if a criminal activity takes place, we have this desire to reduce costs to the counties, a great incentive for those local people to plea bargain down to lesser charges and avoid trials at any cost. That is not good for our law enforcement systems. It is not good for a deterrent on criminals. We need to make a change. Whether this is the best way to do it is a question, but it seems to me like that if we are going to have equality, if we are going to have good criminal prosecution and good defense, that it needs to be done equally from the state level, not by the local entities, whether it is Douglas County or Logan County or Hooker County, or however big or small the county might be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.