

February 12, 1996 LB 1044

and talked on the issue, whether you raised questions or concerns, or what-have-you, because I think it was very helpful and illuminating. There are a lot of questions that remain to be answered, I understand that, as we go through the legislation, but I think clearly we are headed in the right direction. There is a lot of reasons for this bill, and even though Senator Witek may not get the point or understand particularly what we are trying to do here, I want to reiterate what I see is happening. We've got a Congress that is saying we can't afford the sort of spending that we've had in the past, we must cut back. And, primarily, what they are talking about are health and human services; they are talking about Medicaid, they are talking about welfare, they are talking about other areas in which these agencies are primarily responsible. We have got to get our act together to respond to the federal changes, to be ready for those changes, to have every dollar saved that we can in meeting the needs of people by providing services. This is the step we've got to take because we are in for change. The Congressional changes, the federal changes, whether large or small, will occur to some degree or another. So to get ready for that, this is one step that we need to take. But even if that wasn't looming out there, and that isn't the reason that we started on this path; it's that we know at the state level we had a problem and we need to get our act together in any event. And by doing so, by getting our state agencies together, by getting them to work together, we carry through in the regional delivery systems, they get their act together, and they work with the communities. And the whole thing that I see as ultimately evolving out of this is that our communities can take hold of and grab hold of and take...take charge of the problems they have in dealing with those in need in their communities, whether they have criminal justice needs, whether they have poverty needs, health care needs, other types of unmet needs that are now having such a difficult time being achieved. We have tried to take, at the state level, and categorically address those. Now we need to functionally address those and bring together all those elements that attempt to serve people in this state, and have them working together, and empower communities to come up with plans that will achieve their needs, and I think go farther than anything the state can do, anything the federal government can do, anything we can do at the regional level. It is best left at the community level, but we can't get there from here without this bill. We can't get the pieces pulled together to get the picture that can clarify what