

SENATOR WILL: Thank you, Senator Hillman. Senator Wehrbein.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Mr. Speaker and members, I'll be very fairly brief because I know several want to talk about this yet. I simply wanted to call to your attention to something I have here from a quote. I don't know where it came from but it's within the industry: It's not that the world's COBOL programmers don't know how to fix the problem or that current mainframe programming languages are incapable of handling dates in the next century. The problem is that the mountain of old fragile mainframe code still in use in business around the world, and that applies to Nebraska also because we patched together software, my understanding is, for 15 or 20 years also, that around the world off and running processes that lie right at the heart of a company's business, state's business, these applications have been around so long, were developed in such tangles of spaghetti code and have been modified in undocumented ways so many times that no one now employed by the company, in this case, knows how to fix them. In some cases, no one alive now knows how. That's probably an exaggeration. That's out of PC Magazine, March 16, 1993. That's where that quote's from. The issue is that it is a serious problem. We've gotten by for several years, I understand, I have to say some of this is second and third hand, at the state level with our programming, our mainframe and what have you. We've gradually gone to PCs, but I want to assure you that we can't go completely to main...to PCs. We have to stay on mainframe for a certain amount. I think it's maybe 40 percent now. I don't know exactly how much we're on the mainframe, with statewide accounting, payroll, tax processing and storage, if nothing else. All of these, I understand, cannot be done on PCs. So even though I'm sure there's a trend toward that and if you only look at the amount of computers we own you would know that there's been that, but we are not going to be able to abandon our mainframe. We have to get in and do some things in this area with this programming and that's the reason for the bill. I was just thinking, I believe it was about a month...a year ago today, I know it's the 20th or 22nd, that Mike first brought, Mike Calvert, first brought this to my attention and so I've had six months or a year to sorrow over this. I mean I can't believe that we have to spend 28 or 30 million dollars to solve a problem. I know many of you, that's not...you're just now hearing that and it's difficult. It's not something that I