

April 1, 1996

LP 1059

further on the bill, Mr. Clerk?

ASSISTANT CLERK: Senator Wesely would move to amend.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Senator Wesely to open on your amendment.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. President and members, after we debated the bill on General File last week, I listened very carefully to the comments and concerns that were expressed, and I am offering this amendment in an attempt to compromise and address those concerns. Among the things that I heard on the discussion last week, Senator Chambers in particular was concerned about the impact of removing the counties from any responsibility for general assistance and medical assistance, indigent care program, general assistance program. I also know Douglas County has been concerned about that particular point and, as a result, they have been concerned about the bill. They have generally supported these efforts in the past but the number of concerns that they had have been expressed to me. So in listening to that debate, and that is the biggest expense in the bill. The bill that we have before you, in its original form, would have funded almost \$21 million of current county property taxes, expenditures for health and human services. The concern was \$21 million. On the one hand, Senator Chambers thought it was too little in terms of property tax relief and others thought it was too much in terms of the state assuming that kind of financial obligation. So, it seemed to be a no win situation for me. It wasn't enough to be significant in property tax relief but it was too significant to absorb into the budget, in some people's minds. So, what I am offering here is to recognize that that amount of money does have concern for many of you. This would reduce that \$21 million figure down to about \$7 million and fund the programs that are currently paid for by the county that deal with these regional systems that we have been talking about. In a sense, it is an attempt to recognize that that is of primary concern. If we are to streamline the Health and Human Services system in the state of Nebraska, that we have discussed with the passage of LB 1044, we must find a way to bring a change in the current governance structure. Currently for instance, if you want to set up in the state a single entry point for an individual to get help when they need health and human services, you would have to jump through any number of hoops and offices to accomplish that right now because of the current changes in governance. You have