

found on Journal page 1722. This is the Work Nebraska amendment that was proposed in the Governor's budget originally, his original budget proposal. It was not advanced in the appropriations package, and I will be very honest with all of you. I want to make a few comments about the importance of it in Nebraska's particular and very unique situation nationally, but I will not be taking the amendment to a vote. And part of that is based on the revenue collections that have been reported for the last quarter, and various conversations with members on the floor. Nebraska is indeed in a unique situation. We've worked very hard and often, as I believe Senator Schrock said, struggled to vote for incentive packages to attract new businesses and new industry to Nebraska. The other side of that, however, is that because we have an incredibly low unemployment rate, our other problem now becomes the recruitment of employees, not just employers. We have consistently had one of the lowest, if not the lowest, unemployment rate in the nation for the last four or five years. A survey of 17 Nebraska communities in 1996 revealed that 14 of those are experiencing labor shortages. In many cases, wages are up because of unemployment, which is the good side of it. On the other hand, there needs to be some statewide effort, or at least a coordinated effort, to attract employees to the state of Nebraska. The original proposal included four parts, one which included a community-coordinated employee recruitment that allowed communities to get technical assistance and apply for a \$20,000 dollar-for-dollar matching grant in which to do labor recruitment for their area or their community. It included a job link system whereby we could do a better job of matching employees seeking new jobs with those jobs that were available, to look at a first-time kind of data base that looked for employment conditions. There is no such bank as this in Nebraska, so it would make it easier for potential employees to find the kinds of jobs, wages and benefits, locations and kinds of businesses in Nebraska in which they may locate, and then a job training referral component. The amendment was \$360,000 in actually new funds that would have been within the Department of Economic Development's budget. I wanted to make these points this evening. I think that this is not the year to do it, especially in light of, as I said, the revenue projections and potential budget problems later. But I do think it's something that we are going to have to deal with in the future, and I think certainly next year when we come back with our budget and new legislation that we need to take a serious look at the