

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
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will note that the Center for Rural Affairs is very supportive of this particular bill in its form right now, as an amendment. They believe that there is certainly a connection between what neighborhood communities, neighborhood associations do and what rural communities do, and they understand that sometimes it is the smaller grants and the smaller activities that contribute as much to the well-being of the small, rural community and neighborhood as some of the larger funding streams that are available. There is also support from the Children and Family Coalition of Nebraska for this, and there is also support from the Nebraska Rural Development Commission on this, not to mention, of course, the support by neighborhood associations across the state. I would yield the rest of my time to Senator Vrtiska, if he would care to comment on this amendment.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Senator Vrtiska, you're recognized.

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. Senator Kiel came to me with this amendment, which is actually her bill, and asked if I would accept that amendment on LB 202, and I said I would, simply because it goes in the direction that LB 202 actually was...has been attempting to do over the last number of years. Many of you know that LB 202 is a carbon copy of LB 144, that was passed in 1995, for the purpose of encouraging economic development throughout Nebraska. Most of you are aware of the fact that one of my goals, when I came in the Legislature, was to encourage economic development for the state in both the urban and the rural areas of Nebraska and I think under LB 144 that's been accomplished. As I told you on the opening of this bill, last week, this is a tool that's been used across the state, by every county in the state, in developing areas of economic development for their area and for the state as a whole. And so Senator Kiel has suggested that this small grant program, that would then tie in with the original intent of the bill, would in fact do some things for neighborhoods and small communities, and also large communities, but neighborhood groups to in fact encourage them to do the things that she talked to you about. So, I support the amendment to LB 202. I think that all of us together... Obviously, I understand that it costs money, there's no question about that. But the question then comes down, is it a cost, or is it an investment? I consider it to be an investment in the