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LB 637

SENATOR D. PEDERSON: Mr. President, members of the body, I first heard about this program this last fall, when I met with our district judge and our clerk of the district court, and they were very upset about this program, they were very critical of the task force that had been put together. And they weren't necessarily objecting as much to the result, as the fact that they didn't have input into this. There were people that were left out of that task force development, and they felt that they should be included. But after our last hearing on this matter, on General File, I came to two conclusions about this particular bill, and maybe it says something about us, too. It occurs to me that we don't like two things. Number one, we don't like change; and, number two, we don't like mandates. And I think that that kind of fits into this particular program. And the question that I would ask you is, are we deciding whether we should be engaged in this program that the federal government has told us we have to be engaged in, or is it optional with us? I think it's not optional. I think it's a matter that we need to be engaged in, this program. We need to figure out the most appropriate way to do this. I don't think it accomplishes much for us to debate whether we should or shouldn't do this. That question has already been answered. And we've accepted money from the federal government for child welfare. And I think the way we have moved along in this matter, we have already, I think, from what I've seen, lost \$15 million from that program. We're taking that directly from our most needy. So, anyway, I say that is what is at risk is our continued loss of funds. I think we're going to lose that money, even if we pass something today, we are going to still lose that \$15 million. I think we risk losing an additional great amount of money. And I think that we should move forward as well as we can to accomplish what has been mandated. And I don't think it's a question, is our system going to work better than the federal system? I don't think we have that question. I was interested in what Senator Bohlke was saying, that there are two states that have...have not complied, or have received a waiver--Nevada and South Carolina, I believe, are the two states that she referred to. I would like to ask Senator Brown, if she knows anything about the status of those two states?

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Brown, would you yield to a question?