

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

February 23, 2000 LB 1243

that was being talked about was being talked about in terms of block grants; and so the block grant concept was popular to think about, plus the reality might have been that we might have had to try to implement that in some fashion. And so we looked at...at that approach to special ed, saying, okay, if a district has X population of special ed students you get X amount of money to work with, whether or not that would be a cost-containing measure that could and should be implemented. We looked at the...at the eligibility criteria, whether that could be changed; whether we should, as one of the provisions in this bill that's being amended out, whether we should empower districts with reimbursement for legal expenses if they challenge some of the requests for special ed services and, rather than fight the battle and spend the money for lawyer fees, which many times they've chosen not to do because of the great costs involved, should we reimburse them for legal expenses as part of the reimbursement, and so on and so forth. The upshot of it and the conclusion was, and, as Senator Bohlke said, it was unanimous, was that at that point in time about all we could do probably that was realistic was to try to hold down the increasing expenses by putting a fairly tight lid on the growth rate and that's...and that's what was done. And now here we are and I see the problem. It would not appear to me that there are any choices at this point in time other than to do what is being suggested. In the longer run, I think we're going to have to continue to search for options for this...for this need and how to fill this need. It is a true, legitimate need that needs to be taken care of, but, as always, there are more than one...there's always more than one way to approach the solution to a problem and so we need to continue to look at that and not forget about it and let it go or it will be back here with us in two years and it will be simply a matter of money again. So I would encourage all of those involved with these...with trying to solve this problem to continue to search for innovative ways to provide care and education in a meaningful way, but also in a cost-effective way, as we go on down the road with the program. I think we're going to be forced to look at...at the age criteria, whether we want to or not, because we just simply don't have an endless stream of funds, and Nebraska is one of the states going beyond the requirements as far as the age criteria, and very good arguments have been made to include the zero to three population. When I