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March 14, 2000 LB 1217

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Time. Thank you, Senators. Senator Byars, on the Thompson amendment to LB 1217.

SENATOR BYARS: Thank you, Mr. President and colleagues. You know, we've all heard time and again about the squeaky wheel getting the grease. I think this wheel has been squeaking for a long time and this body and prior and present administration has been very reluctant to grease it. It disturbs me greatly that we...anyone that hasn't looked at this facility needs to do so. Adjectives that I'm thinking of I don't think do justice to the conditions that these young women are living under. Have they made some mistakes in their life that they deserve to have some sort of detention or punishment? Yes. Does that mean that we should treat them as...as lesser than citizens should be treated? No. Are they there so we can try to make them useful members of society? Yes. Do we do that by asking them to live in conditions that are unsafe, that I feel that are unhealthy? Does this help them to be useful citizens, or does it just continue to create in them the negativism and the poor attitudes that they've had that have gotten them there in the first place? Yes, it does. I am a big supporter of the arts. I'm a big supporter of our college systems. I look at the dollars in LB 1217 that we have allocated to rebuild buildings on colleges...at our state colleges, to do things that we should be doing within Sheldon Art Museum, all of those things that are important that I'm extremely supportive of. But are they more important, ladies and gentlemen, than these youth? No. There's no way that you can tell me you can substitute a building to house a piece of art or on a college campus to relate that to a young woman's life. You can't do that. You can't convince me of that. I think this wheel needs greased and I don't think that we're fulfilling our responsibilities as public policymakers unless we provide that grease. I think the allocation, the future allocation, that Senator Thompson is asking for is a very small investment in the future of these young women and I ask you to please listen to what she's saying. Please, let's make this a priority. We've given it all the lip service in the world without any kind of action. Now is the time for us to be responsible. Now is the time for us to be counted. I'll yield my time to Senator Thompson, if you would like additional time, Senator Thompson, and continue your dialogue with Senator Raikes.