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FLOOR DEBATE

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colleges and community colleges. Another 24.2 percent has to do with Medicaid and public assistance. That area, in particular, is rising rapidly, significantly. It varies, depending on the figures, but it's in the neighborhood of 15 to 18 percent per year and that is one part of our budget that is very hard to control. I'm sure there will be questions on it. I'll try to answer those. The other one, the other 24.8 percent is made up of what you might call operations, and that includes the court system, Corrections, State Patrol, and our 24/7 facilities, i.e., regional centers, veterans' homes, and Beatrice State Developmental Center. That...those alone make up almost half of that 25 percent of the budget, the \$650 million. And so this is where the budget that we have presented, I guess we'll...technically I should wait till the committee amendments come up, Mr. Speaker?

SENATOR CUDABACK: That's your call, Senator Wehrbein.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: What I'm talking about, the committee amendments, as provided by the Appropriations Chair...committee, will become the bill. So I will go to the amendment, AM1111, which will become the bill, so everyone understands. This is a budget that our committee has spent, obviously, lots of time on, and it's not just simply the last 70 days, but it's...we've been over the budget a year ago at this time, we've been over the budget in a special session, and we've gone over it now again, and I would say it's our best judgment, if I may presume to speak for the committee, that it's our best judgment of what Nebraska needs to at least hold its own for the next two years. Now I know there's going to be lots of disagreement as to what that constitutes, and that is very logical for debate. But as I mentioned in the four areas...three areas which make up, education, a half of the budget, operations, a half a budget, and Medicaid...I meant a quarter of a budget, Medicaid and operations each a quarter of the budget, it's very difficult to cut those areas much more without, in our mind, doing...I don't want to use too strong a words, but very serious damage to many areas of our institutions of this state. And so this will be...this can be logical to debate. I'll be interested in following the debate. Obviously, there's a gap and I, if I may frame it philosophically, I think we're going to have to decide