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SENATOR THOMPSON: ...but it didn't. But we are looking at trends that are happening nationally that are affecting our state beyond that issue alone, and the fact that we are looking at a four-year problem, not a two-year problem. I hope you may have seen this Council of State Governments publication that came out, and essentially it says there are four things that have driven the budgets. It isn't that we're wild spenders. It isn't that we're not spending within our means. Our budgets are being driven by federal mandates, court decisions, structural changes in the tax base, which we got to with Senator Brashear's bill to some extent, that our revenue comes in differently because our economies have changed, and because of demographic changes--more kids, more old people. And when I get another chance to speak, I want to talk about how these play out in Nebraska and how difficult it is to get to a balanced budget because these are the...

SPEAKER BROMM: Time.

SENATOR THOMPSON: ...trends that we are facing. Thank you.

SPEAKER BROMM: Thank you, Senator Thompson. Senator Smith, and then Senator Vrtiska.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. To continue my prior remarks in pointing out the fact that we're in a sobering situation here, I really commend the various groups that have come before the Legislature, maybe one member at a time, maybe a group, with at least a proposed alternative, and I appreciate that fact. Whether we agree or disagree, I appreciate the fact that that takes place. And it reminds me of a time that I was pulled aside by someone who said, you know, don't cut us, and I said, what would you propose? Well, that's your job. And it's a bit frustrating when we're constantly faced with situations like that and, you know, I hope that we can arrive at something; that our higher priorities might be holding the line and not cutting them. I know that there are programs that I've supported in the past that I can no longer support given the conditions of our economy, given the conditions facing the common Nebraskan. But again, I want to emphasize the cause and effect. There is a cause and effect of