

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

May 6, 2003

LB 283

pile and you compare it to a decade ago, it's smaller. There is less available for treatment and, as a result, when...and I know I use this example a lot...when you put a piece of plastic wrap down and you punch one of the bubbles down, it's going to pop up somewhere else. Well, we're paying for it. And we are not doing what a lot of states are doing in terms of community corrections and being effective with that money. We need to prime the pump and we never ever get there. We never get there. This substance treatment task force, when it issued its report, listed dozens of recommendations. Some of those have been implemented, but the big piece we don't have is the money to be able to turn the ship, and this is the question in their report that's in bold. The question remains, does Nebraska have the will to institutionalize the changes needed to increase public health and public safety by meeting the substance abuse treatment needs of criminal and juvenile justice clients? Until we get some systems in place to turn the tide, to cut the number of people who are committing crimes, to cut the number of people who return to our very, very expensive facilities, until we put that lesser amount of money in at the beginning, we can't turn the tide and we can't get here. You'll be sitting here, for those of us who are term limited and we have four years, we're going to be here for four years hearing about what's happening in the budget in the criminal justice system, and we're going to hear about what's happening in our Medicaid budget. We're going to hear about all of that because a piece of what we need to do to help our budget situation has to be treatment. It just has to be. We can't just put a Band-Aid over this problem. I read this weekend in the paper about what's happening at our Hastings facility, and those of you who want...who argue to cut spending, well, that's what happens when you cut spending. When you cheap out and you cut the staff and you don't take care of the...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR THOMPSON: ...business of the state, our core responsibilities, you get reports from the feds. And this isn't the first one we've gotten. We've got one on child welfare that's every bit as scathing as this one is. You don't adequately staff, you have problems. You don't take care of the way the building needs to be constructed and designed because