

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

May 14, 2003

LB 407

the process. This matter, it seems to me, is not very simple at all. I want to remind you of the time in the 1980s, when I was first in the Legislature, when there was a big movement nationwide and in this state to get everybody out of the regional centers and into community mental health centers, neighborhood community health treatment. And that was a good thing, in my opinion. But what actually happened was that we threw people out of the facilities and then we didn't have the money to properly supervise them and take care of them in community settings. And we have suffered from that for decades, for decades. It was poorly done. And I don't know if that's the way we always have to end up doing things. But I would like to think that there could be a more careful process and a more planned process. And just because you're relying more on community corrections doesn't mean it's going to be cheaper. That was the big argument in the 1980s; get these people out of the expensive regional centers and get them into community health facilities, and that will be a lot cheaper. But it wasn't a lot cheaper, and we didn't have the money, and they weren't properly taken care of. And you could have the same thing happening here. I'm not saying the parallel is 100 percent. I'm not saying this isn't movement in the right direction, because I think it is. But I'm saying there are different ways that this could happen, and some of them are good, and some of them are bad, and if we don't give this a lot of thought, we're not going to do it right. And the second problem I see...a second problem I see with doing this on the basis of the Lincoln Correctional Center is that it make this...Lincoln Correctional Center is the third largest facility. It may turn out to be one or two of the smaller facilities that it would make more sense to close. I think it would be excellent to look at all of them and have a study...

SPEAKER BROMM: One minute.

SENATOR BEUTLER: ...that didn't start out with the assumption that we're thinking about closing this particular one. Let's look at the system and what makes sense. Let's not misfocus by shutting down this system...only we're really not shutting it down; I'm not worried too much about that. The Appropriations Committee can put the appropriations back in the bill next year,