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FLOOR DEBATE

March 2, 2005

LB 546

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Brown, to open on LB 546.

SENATOR BROWN: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, during the 1990s, the population in Omaha increased by 16 percent, the population in Lincoln increased by 17 percent, and Bellevue's population increased by 43 percent. Much of that increase, though, was at the expense of other parts of the state of Nebraska. A researcher has suggested that had the entire state of Nebraska grown at the rate that the rest of the nation has grown, that we should have a population of 4.5 million people. We are quite a ways short of that. The designation of a metropolitan statistical area is a major issue for business location within that area, and in order to be seriously considered for regional designation of an MSA, you need to be able to show...and a regional designation of a million people is a bar that certain businesses will only look at locating in a region of at least a million people. So in order to have a regional designation as an MSA, in the MSA, at the time of the census you need to be able to show real interaction within the region, real interaction between the communities in that region and other substantive things that you can point to. So this bill, the eastern Nebraska innovation zone that is set out in this bill, probably the primary aspect of it is to position us for economic development and position us so that at the time of the next census there would be consideration of an MSA of a million in the eastern Nebraska area. Now, I have spent quite a bit of time researching regional economic coordination and what makes it successful and what about it is just maybe effective in certain areas of economic development but not as successful as it could possibly be, and the issues that I've come up with are, first of all, that there is a meaningful public-private partnership, and I think that that's especially critical in Nebraska because we do have a history in...especially...well, we have a strong history of a lot of the development being driven by the private sector and by our chambers of commerce. But we also have a populous state where we have a number of elected officials that are involved in most decisions, and so having a way that you can really have a meaningful public-private partnership is, I think, important for the success of any kind of regional coordination, but particularly important in