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LB 273

the bill because I do stand in support of LB 273. It is another tool, I feel, that communities can use in Nebraska. I think in reality, we have to realize that our resources are generally very limited, considering the size of the state and the diversity of the communities that we have throughout the state. I was trying to assess how many communities we actually might have. I know that I have 23 communities in my district alone, and I really don't know, but I'm sure that it is in...well, I know it would be in the hundreds of communities that we have. I wanted to share with you a couple of comments also from the Rural Development Commission. And Senator Cunningham passed out what we felt were our three priorities this year. And I wanted to just read to you the mission of the Rural Development Commission which proposes administrative and policy changes that enhance the quality of life and the business environment, making Nebraska the premier state in which to live and to develop business opportunities. And that is one of our basic goals. The commissioners that serve represent almost every...well, they do represent throughout the state every corner, as I mentioned, from Scottsbluff to Nebraska City to northeast Nebraska to southeast Nebraska. I did also just wanted to point out a couple of things. Senator Cunningham stated this has to do with building, education, and development of communities, leadership within those communities. Just talking about small businesses, I received some business statistics for Nebraska. And businesses with five or fewer employees are the bedrock of Nebraska's economy. The 2000 census showed the total of 152,000 businesses in the state having four or fewer employees. This equates to 85 percent of the businesses operating in Nebraska. So when we talk about small businesses being the bedrock, this is certainly what we are talking about and trying to encourage in this bill is that we strive to work to have new businesses. I also wanted to talk a little bit about Senator Landis' comments the last time we discussed the bill, saying that we have a lot of repetitive organizations and a lot of the same kinds of programs. He mentioned the EDGE program. This is a training program. It was started in 1993. It is a program through the University of Nebraska. It does offer business training to about ten communities, but each training course costs around...that community around \$10,000. And this is what we are talking about then in LB 273 is to allow those