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FLOOR DEBATE

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needs of the more rural areas of this state? And then when we come up with these ideas, these bills are called piecemeal. They're called unrealistic, they're called inefficient, and they are deemed as being not effective. Okay, let's look at LB 273. And again, Senator Flood and Senator Johnson, I apologize for getting off the highway bill, but let's look at LB 273. The intent of this bill is to support economically depressed rural areas in Nebraska by providing them with the mechanism that will create a community capacity to build and to sustain programs that will assist in creating businesses, maintaining those businesses, and transferring those businesses to other owners in the community. In short, the proposed grants would help communities learn how to help themselves. Most communities won't learn how to efficiently build capacity without outside funding and assistance. LB 273 is a mechanism to help move communities towards business development. An example was given at our committee hearing on this bill. If a committee...or if a community decides it needs to attract technology-driven entrepreneurs, it could hire a technology expert to do an assessment of the infrastructure, then development and implementation of the desired plan. It was said that Nebraska offers some excellent resources, but the testifier also felt that there is a weakness in the ability to identify community needs and assess the resources to meet those needs. LB 273 can help to develop the linkage between community needs and available resources. By having two or more political subdivisions work together, and I think this is important...by having two or more political subdivisions work together and by having communities choose which subdivision should work together, based on the different dynamics in each individual community, that's a plus of this bill and of this program. I believe it's a benefit that the local leaders in our small communities would be committed to making these projects work. The communities must demonstrate that they are ready to receive help, and they must apply as a collaboration. And they have to provide a dollar-for-dollar match for the grant funds they receive. Entrepreneurship drives economic growth. Entrepreneurship creates community-based leadership. I think that's a point many people have missed in this bill.

SENATOR ENGEL: One minute.