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FLOOR DEBATE

April 5, 2005

LB 709

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: AM1027 is adopted. Mr. Clerk, next item.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Beutler would move to amend the committee amendments with AM1028. (Legislative Journal page 1057.)

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Senator Beutler, you're recognized to open.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Lieutenant Governor, members of the Legislature, I will withdraw this amendment eventually here, because Senator Erdman, in response to myself and I think other senators in all probability, has, by virtue of a subsequent amendment, expanded the involvement, basically, of people in this particular study, and he's done this in a better way than my amendment suggests. So we'll move on to his amendment presently. But I wanted to take a little time to outline areas I think we should discuss a little more in terms of this whole study, and I think people should give additional thought to what might want to be included in this study or whether there shouldn't be a subsequent study, maybe a two-part study, because I think there are a lot of things, a lot of factors, that have gone into making the Medicaid problem the problem that it is today, and nobody denies that it's a fiscal problem. Many factors have gone into it that this Legislature I don't think is properly addressing, or at least we could be addressing and we are not. And it seems to me that we should be addressing these things as we approach at the same time the possibility of restructuring or reoriented...reorienting elements of the Medicaid programs to make them more efficient and more defensible. Here are the things, and I'm just going to list them in the brief time that I have at the moment, but I think they bear further discussion. Here are the things, a number of the things, that I think have a significant impact in creating and perpetuating the Medicaid problem. First of all, there's the problem of health-care coverage, the problem of insurance. We know now that approximately 40 percent of Nebraskans are not covered by their employers' health-care plans, and that that number continues to increase. What is this Legislature doing about that? It seems like in so many ways we continue to wait for the federal government to act, and yet they do nothing and the problems continue to fester and to exacerbate our fiscal