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LB 709

amendment,...

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Time.

SENATOR ERDMAN: ...or within the discussion here on the floor. Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor.

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: Senator Johnson. We'll move to Senator Don Pederson.

SENATOR D. PEDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor. Members of the Legislature, this has actually been one of the more enlightening discussions, I think, that we've had on this floor because, as we started out in this discussion, we have a problem in Nebraska, and I think the charts that were submitted initially by Senator Erdman, which were prepared by the Revenue Department, show that there is a dramatic increase in Medicaid and in...actually, in school aid. And if you look at that chart, you will see that if we have...we currently have a \$6 billion budget, approximately. In the year 2025, we would have approximately an \$8 billion budget if things go as they have been going. You will see that Medicaid would take almost half of that. The other almost half of that would go for school aid. There would be less than a half a billion dollars for everything else to run this entire state. So it's eminently important that we take up this matter of Medicaid. I know that whenever you start studying a matter there's always the fear that something that will hurt people will take place, but I think it's not very enlightened for you not to look at it and see what is happening, what we can do, if anything, to change the course of things. I've been disturbed by the fact that President Bush is worried that Medicare will have a problem in the year 2042, but going by the charts that we have here, we have a much more imminent problem involving Medicaid. And so I think we need to start looking at where we are and what we are doing. There was a statement that was made by Senator Byars yesterday that I was concerned about, and so I went back to look at our records. The Fiscal Office of the Legislature has come up with the Medicaid history for the last 20 years, and we started out in the year 1985-1986. We had a 6.9 percent increase in Medicaid. In '95-96, it was up to 15.3 percent.