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LB 709

I've come around slowly on this as to what we need to do, and even yet today I'm still not quite sure what that is. But about three weeks ago Senator Hagel met with several senators, and the one thing that he said is this: There's lots of discussion going on about Social Security reform and not much about Medicaid and Medicare reform. And he said that the Social Security problem is minute compared to where the trouble is that we're getting in with Medicare. One of the things that as we've been talking here over the last day or two, let me tell you where a few of us were at in the Health and Human Services Committee. We were reluctant to vote this to the floor as the bill originally existed. An amendment was then made to broaden the scope so that more people would become involved in this study; that we wouldn't just appoint a few people and let them do the study, because the danger of that is that you have a predetermination that follows the views of those people that are appointed. So the broader the group you get, the better off we are. Our amendment passed and the bill was advanced to the floor. I think what Senator Erdman has done now with AM1049 is a better step than what our amendment was coming out of committee. This broadens the bill to where it is far more acceptable to me. I think what Senator Chambers, Senator Byars and a few others have been alluding to here, I think perhaps we need some more discussion on this as far as exactly how the law is written, how it comes back to the Legislature and so on, but I definitely think that we're moving in the right direction. One of the things that I personally feel is that in all our planning regarding Medicaid, with the people that are involved, I think that they have to take partial ownership in their decision-making. There has to be a good carrot provided to these people and also a whip, and this applies not just to Medicaid, because there are abuses throughout the system. Poor and rich abuse the system. I think probably the biggest reason why we should advance this amendment and this bill is that never again in the foreseeable future will we have the institutional history that is present in this body at this time. We have people here now...

PRESIDENT SHEEHY: One minute.

SENATOR JOHNSON: ...that know what has happened in the past and