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May 5, 2005

LB 425

Journal pages 1392-1393.)

The next amendment I have, Senator Chambers, AM1455. (Legislative Journal page 1393.)

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Chambers, on AM1455.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you. Mr. President and members of the Legislature, the next three items relate to programs associated with the Nebraska Supreme Court. When these items were being discussed by me with the Chief Justice, I told him, if there is not a willingness on the part of the Appropriations Committee to give funding for these programs, I want you to tell me, because I'm going to try to get that funding. Before anybody hits the ceiling, court fees and costs are being raised substantially this year. I don't think that the court's essential duties ought to be paid by fees. That money should come from the General Fund. But there is a deficiency in the judges retirement program and there are some other matters which fees have been raised for in the past to fund. All three of these programs together will come to a total of about \$101,000 the first year and \$99,000 the second. This particular item in AM1455 has to do with the minority justice task force. It was put together by the bar association and the Supreme Court. The bar association is picking up 50 percent of the cost of staffing and operating this task force. A lot of studying has been done, statistics and raw data have been gathered. This body has enacted several laws that I have asked you to enact that will provide information that the court needs to evaluate how fair or unfair the system is operating. Disparities were detected based on race, in some cases gender. But rather than drawing a conclusion other than one justified by the facts, the court wants to gather those facts. For example, when it came to presentence investigation reports, the court had to get authority by the statute to have its people or its designee go through those reports to get certain information that would be used in this study, certain information from juror questionnaires which information is not available to the public. So the court has been doing all that it could. The amount that would be needed to make up the difference or the shortfall here would be \$28,500 for the next two years. It may seem like a