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LB 40

Preister, AM1693. (Legislative Journal page 1711.)

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Preister, you are recognized to speak.

SENATOR PREISTER: Thank you, Honorable President, friends all. Last Thursday, I looked in the World-Herald and the headline read "HUD bungling costly to Omaha." And it went on and independent investigation had determined that federal housing officials bungled the process last year to award \$157 million in grants to reduce lead-based paint hazard, further proof to Omaha officials that the city was unfairly denied its grant. Loss of the \$3 million grant dealt a serious blow to Omaha's efforts to repair deteriorating lead paint in houses and has delayed efforts to reduce the threat of lead poisoning to young children. That got my attention real quickly and I began talking to members on the floor. I talked with Senator Schrock. He and I went to visit with the Governor and the director of the Department of Environmental Quality. We were searching for ways to address this for the future. That may go on so that a correction can be made to how these failings of the allocation process were conducted. But, in the meantime, that money is not coming to Omaha to continue these abatement programs. So the amendment that I have before you takes no funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Rest assured I'm not affecting that fund. But it would provide \$300,000 as a stopgap measure to keep these lead-based programs going until another funding cycle can come in. So an amendment that's before you would provide \$300,000 one time, this time to go to the lead-based paint remediation program that's a certified program that the city is conducting already, so that we don't lose continuity on these contracts we've currently got going, and to keep the program moving forward until additional funding cycle comes forward. The money will come from the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Fund. That fund is solvent. It is not in any jeopardy and these monies would not pose a problem to the fund. I did check with the fund, and the solvency is there. I did visit with Senator Jensen from Health and Human Services Committee. I visited with Senator Schrock, obviously, as I said. I have visited with a number of members and given them information about this, Senator Don Pederson as well, the Chair