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FLOOR DEBATE

January 26, 2006 LB 529

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR BEUTLER: The state...can I talk a little bit on your time? It would...

SENATOR SMITH: Oh, not much, please.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Okay. Well, then let me make some...

SENATOR SMITH: Perhaps I'll have some time at the end of my remarks, and I'd be happy...

SENATOR BEUTLER: Okay.

SENATOR SMITH: ...to yield that to you, but perhaps not (laugh) either, but I'd push my button again. I rise with serious concern. At the same time, I have an appreciation for what Senator Beutler is attempting to do. I truly believe that he's looking for good public policy. I have concerns, number one, that we're raising fees and, at the same time, trying to say that we're being more efficient. And I've also become a little wary of promises of efficiency when truly costs are increased. I think this is an example of an increase in state spending, basically, you know, taking over what is now a locally functioning service or certainly a local function in its entirety. I struggle to find a laundry list of bad examples of the current process. Perhaps I just haven't been paying enough attention, but I do know that in western Nebraska we had a change in the clerk of the district court's office 10 or 12 years ago, and it was at the ballot box. There were concerns that were raised by various officials and various interested parties, and there was a change as a result of the election. It worked. I have serious concerns about raising this fee because it's an increase in fees. And perhaps I can be convinced otherwise. I doubt it. But I am very, very cautious when I hear promises of efficiencies when there's a fee increase that is necessary, and in light of a surplus of General Fund revenue as well. So I'm going to listen to the debate, by all means, but certainly I'm going to be a tough one to convince that LB 529 is actually a step in the right direction when we look at all of the factors, be they fiscal primarily and public policy