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FLOOR DEBATE

March 14, 2006 LB 1060

Erdman. Senator Jensen.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor and members of the Legislature. In 1996 there was an attempt actually to remove the dollars that were specified by the Appropriations Committee, the \$519,841, from the budget process, and there was a debate that was going on, and it was getting very heated. And it was, if I recall, it was towards the evening, and I introduced an amendment which is now on page 2, line 15 through 18, that said none of the General Funds provided under this program shall be used to perform or facilitate the performance of abortion, or counsel, or to refer for abortion, which is language that had been used and was in our statutes, same language. And with that introduction of that amendment, the funds stayed in the appropriations package, and since 1996 have been there. Now if you don't believe that we have an STD problem in this state, you need to go to your public health department, you need to go to a doctor's office, or a hospital, because Nebraska is, and particularly a few cities in our state, are leading in the nation, or at least in the top five or ten cities in the nation, with number of STDs. And it's so very, very important to get this testing and to get it to as many people as we can. The dollar amount is not being changed through this amendment, and this...by the way, Senator Foley's bill was introduced to the Health Committee, and then after the amendment coming out of the Health Committee it was passed on General File, and that's where it's sitting until...at this particular moment. But since 1996, also, there has not been a request for proposal from Health and Human Services. So we have just renewed the contracts every year with the same individuals, for ten years. Now I come into the Legislature here as a builder, a contractor, and yes, I dealt through those years, generally, with the same subcontractors. But still, every once in a while, I would get a bid from another contractor to first of all ensure that my prices are still competitive, and that my contractor is still willing to work with me. And I used the same plumber, the same electrician for some 20 years, and so I had a great relationship. But in government, particularly in government, you need to have an open bidding process, and all I think that this bill, or at least the way I looked at it when it came before the committee is, it is time, perhaps, that we as a