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said I very much agree with, too. People need to sit down, decide what they want, and do it without calling somebody from outside the state in to tell us how to run our government. And we need to stop using these types of bills to get somebody off the hook. I stand in support of Senator Howard's amendment, and I hope you will, too. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Pedersen. Senator Howard, you're recognized to close, being as there's no other lights on.

SENATOR HOWARD: Actually, I had my light on.

SENATOR CUDABACK: You can speak or close.

SENATOR HOWARD: I'm going to speak.

SENATOR CUDABACK: You may do so.

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you. I think we've shared some good information here. I have a bit more, I think may answer some of the questions that Senator Brown brought up concerning the system, legitimate questions. This is from the task force introduction. Governor Mike Johanns created the Children's Task Force out of concern for an increasing number of violent child deaths that have occurred in Nebraska in recent years. The task force was charged with assessing the child protective service system, identifying the strengths and the weaknesses in the system, and developing recommendations for improvement aimed at preventing future violent child deaths. The task force was comprised of 36 individuals representing various disciplines, areas of expertise and interest. Five meetings were held between October 9 and December 18, 2003. Information about the child protection service system was gathered from the public and from professionals who played key roles within the system through a series of public forums and focus groups that were held across the state. Opportunities for public input were also provided during the task force meetings and through written comments. All together, 26 meetings were held involving 500 people, considerably more than Senator Friend's recommendation. In addition to the information gathered through the public forums and the focus groups, the task force relied on the