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April 3, 2006            LB 709, 1248

SENATOR JENSEN: I need to check on that.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Okay, but it's...

SENATOR BAKER: Time. Thank you, Senator Jensen, Senator Beutler. Senator Jensen, your light is on next if you wish to continue. Senator Jensen, you're recognized to speak.

SENATOR JENSEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. President. When we entered into this and at the very beginning of when the committee first met, the appointed committee, I had the opportunity to say a few words to that committee, and almost I'd like to repeat some of that. You know this LB 709, LB 1248, we don't have to do this. We can fold up our papers and go home on this particular issue. But it just, to me, as somebody who looks at fiscal responsibility, I really feel that that would be improper. Let me tell you what's going to happen if we do nothing. We will continue doing exactly what we're doing and in 2008, 2010, '12, '14 you will see Medicaid continue to grow at a rate that is greater than the revenue that is coming into the state. And then we're going to be faced with that situation that we did a few years ago, and also I think Senator Wehrbein has warned at that, Senator Pederson has warned that, yes, right now we have additional money that we didn't originally feel that we'd have. We have a surplus. And so, along with that, people come in and they ask for more services, and we'll have to see how all this budget works out. But we are going to get to the point that two items--K through 12 and Medicaid--are going to take all the dollars of the state. Then we're going to reach the point where we don't have a choice anymore, and those people who are presently receiving Medicaid, those people who are currently receiving assistance, those on DD, those on...with mental illness and others, we're going to have to decide one day we're going to have to cut a number of these people off the program or we're going to have to reduce the amounts that we're giving them. Or we can also say, well, we won't fund higher education anymore, or we won't fund the State Patrol, parks, water, whatever those issues are. That is a choice that we have. Now, you know, there was some talk about what do we do to change Social Security, that it's not sustainable. The federal government has laid that behind and said we don't have to