

Landis and Senator Wagner. Senator Wagner, Senator Higgins, Senator Schmit, Schmit is excused. Rod Johnson. We are looking for Senator Rod Johnson. Okay, it looks like we are all here, Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I do appreciate your patience and I apologize for taking as much time as I have on this issue. I wouldn't do it if I wasn't sincere and very concerned about this bill and the motion to kill which is now before the body. I think you all know how concerned I am about health care and health care costs and I have been for five years and it is nothing new. This issue also is nothing new. It was considered last year and defeated or at least a version of it was last year defeated by this same body. I am asking you again to consider the arguments that have been proposed then and now to try and defeat LB 429 and the concept behind it. I know you have all been lobbied very heavily and I know that the Hospital Association and the different bonding houses are very much in support of this bill and many of you maybe have already made commitments in support of it. I would ask those of you who have not made such commitments to please keep an open mind. What we are talking about here is the key question that I think faces the state today, that being the health care cost problem. It has dominated the session. The question has found its place in the Medicaid issue, it has found its place in the question of state employees health insurance coverage and the issue is not only prevalent on the state government level but it is prevalent in our everyday lives and as families and citizens throughout the state have found much to their chagrin. We have got to deal with the health care cost problem. We have seen, again I emphasize the handout I put out last year, an increase in general fund Medicaid expenditures of 56.9% from 1980 to 1983. We saw at the same time a state general fund expenditure increase of 21% during that same period. That is almost three times as great an increase for health care costs as general state expenditures. Skyrocketing health care costs can be dealt with in a number of ways. One of them is to decrease the bonded indebtedness of our hospitals. We are far too heavily in debt with our hospitals. We have gone from 17% of our capital and bonded indebtedness to 38% of our hospital capital. Senator Remmers said that, well, there is no other way to do it, and I suggested that there were cash reserves. Senator Johnson last year sent around a copy of the White Paper which showed that Clarkson Hospital had about 18 million dollars in liquid cash assets, Immanuel Hospital in Omaha had 17 million dollars, and so forth.