

March 7, 1984

LB 886

continue the proposal codified in LB 522 to have the counties pay and the state set eligible standards, the eligibility standards. The counties fought to change this but the issue was not agreed upon and was left up to the future. What is the purpose of LB 886? LB 886 will amend a portion of former LB 522 to return to the counties the authority over the medically indigent portion of general assistance needed to control costs, the setting of the eligibility standards. Question. If LB 886 passes, does not this mean that 93 different rules and regulations over the medically indigent program? No. And get this. No, since the medically indigent program is only part of general assistance, all the laws which apply to general assistance apply to the medically indigent program as well. Nebraska law provides very clear requirements for the rules governing the county assistance programs. And these are all listed and you have copies on your desk. I am not going to go through all of those but this shows all the things that the counties are required to do and what the program really is. Now, we will go clear over to the last page. Question. If all this is required now, why do the counties want LB 886? The portion of LB 522 and untouched by LB 604 of last year permits the state to set the eligibility standard for medical services provided by the county general assistance program. Question. Why is setting the eligibility standard so important? And here is the whole crux of the thing. The cost of the program is completely dependent on the eligibility standard. The cost of medical services for the poor is completely unpredictable but may be contained by the eligibility standard which is set. The federal government is continuing to pass welfare costs back to the states. It is conceivable that the State of Nebraska having the authority to set the eligibility standards for county medical assistance will set the standard so the county and the property taxpayer assumes cost not born by the state or those now new costs shifted from the federal government. What is meant by standard of need or eligibility standard in the medically indigent program? I am not going to read all this. What we are talking about is that their standards are not the same completely across the State of Nebraska, and if they are set by the Department, they certainly are not going to be...they are going to be the same across the state. The