

March 13, 1984

LB 1127

at the feet of the committee earlier this session. But it was killed for reasons that I think were pretty valid at the time, you know, questions about cost and some other matters, but nevertheless the concept is the one that is a valid one that we need to pursue. Senator Johnson is right in raising that issue in light of LB 1127. 1127 does save the state a great deal of money by narrowing the disability coverage and I think it is probably a step we would have to take in the state. It will save several million dollars. The bill that we are talking about that is in the amendment, LB 1041, will cost the state a little over a million dollars but it will bring in, as Senator Johnson said, even more than that in federal monies. This money would then be sent to poor families in the State of Nebraska with children in need of medical care, in need of assistance that are not now covered by our Medicaid program. The problem with Medicaid presently is if you are divorced and the woman or the man is home alone with their kids, they are poor, they can get covered, but if they are together, if they are both living together, the husband and wife are still married, have children and are poor, they don't get covered. So the incentive is for them to break up, the husband to leave the home to get a divorce, to do whatever they have to to then get covered because they are poor and can't take care of their children. And you have heard all those stories before about Medicaid covering those sort of situations where somebody gets divorced, the husband divorces the wife and still lives at home because if they were still married they wouldn't get covered by Medicaid. Well that is a pretty silly system to have and it is one that we have in this state and elsewhere in this country and that is why this Ribicoff amendment was adopted. Why should we encourage families to split up to get covered? Why should we not take care of families whether they are divorced or not? If they have needs if they are poor and their kids are in need of medical care, we should take care of them. Why should we have this incentive to break up? It doesn't make any sense. Our social values system I think is all misdirected with the present program and the addition of this coverage I think would help keep families intact and care for their needs. I would support the Johnson amendment.