

he chose six people from the community. But there was no expertise there, it would be as if the six members of the Lancaster delegation were asked to try and determine the cause and circumstances of death. Really that coroner's jury didn't shed any light on the issue, in fact, it further alienated and confused people. I think that it became very clear in our county that that system would not work, that the average citizen or even someone who has been active in the community really doesn't have the expertise to discover the cause or the circumstances of a violent death. Well, I was very impressed in the study committee when we had people who are trained professionals come in and look at medical records and look at photographs and discuss from their experience what they could observe and what they saw as the circumstances of the death. It became very clear to me that other states are having a much more complete review of a variety of deaths in violent or strange circumstances and a lot more answers are being provided for the public and the money that is being spent was spent more wisely than it is in Nebraska. Now I know that some people have concern about the cost to state government of this program. But I think that it is important to point out that money is already being spent across the state for autopsies, for investigations. Estimates are that in Lancaster County that is about \$100,000. In Douglas County it is probably over \$200,000. Probably state-wide when you add it up we are spending \$500,000 to \$600,000 for county attorneys trying to get autopsies done by local doctors. I would say that the adequacy of those investigations is not worth the money that we are spending. Not because they are not good doctors but because they don't have the additional technical expertise that forensic medicine has become. Now when we introduced this bill there was a popular TV show called "Quincy" that talked about a medical legal examiner in the community. He usually, in fact I think every night, solved a case. The show demonstrated that there are specific medical knowledge that can be used to help in the case of violent deaths to determine cause and beyond that when we had testimony before the judiciary committee the medical legal examiner from Oklahoma cited cases of where what had been called accidents turned out to be child abuse, what they had thought in one case to be child abuse turned out to be a genetic disease, what had been ruled accident was suicide and what had been ruled suicide turned out in fact to be an intentional death. So it is a broad range of things that we are talking about. Everybody seems to agree now that the coroner's jury is useless. County attorneys agree, and the study committee agrees. We need to find a better system. The medical legal examiner is a better way for us to be spending tax dollars, county or state, because then the investigations will be of quality and then the investigations will tell us