

have not already done so.

SENATOR NEWELL: Thank you Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Now, Senator Wesely, we left you standing over here with your motion. Now getting to the point I see that we have reduced some of the lights on the board. We now have Senator Fitzgerald and Senator Labeledz that want to speak after Senator Wesely. Senator Wesely has the floor on his amendment.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I know that this motion and my concern about the Douglas County Hospital annex leased to the State of Nebraska for a veterans home has caused a great deal of concern among my colleagues. I would say the least their consternation has been made very clear to me. However I feel obligated in the interest of the people of this state and the tax payers in particular to raise the issues that I hope to raise today about the purchase. I mean, the lease, excuse me. Let me clarify that we are not purchasing this annex we are in fact leasing it. The first question that we have, if in the bill itself it states that it is a one dollar a year lease for eternity or whether or not it...is that specified in the bill? That is a question that I have at this point whether or not Douglas County could turn on that point and in fact increase the lease or make some changes. Another point that I think we need to keep in mind is the actual need for this facility in the first place. Do we need, does the State of Nebraska, does the Veterans Home Administration need to become involved with this lease arrangement and to establish this home. I think that all of the statistics that have been shown to me, and there have been a number of studies in this area indicate that in fact it does not need it. The State of Nebraska at this time is already over bedded in private and public nursing home beds. That over bedding has caused a great deal of concern among all people because of the cost involved. When you over bed that means that there are a lot of empty beds and empty beds cost money to maintain. So everybody is paying more for the services that they are getting because of this over bedding. You can see that reflected in the Medicaid cost the State of Nebraska tax payers are paying. Each year a 20% increase, each year another 20 million dollars or so. This is a tremendous increase and a tremendous strain on our budget. Supporting this proposal from Senator Fitzgerald and the other members that are sponsoring this bill would in fact probably have a negative impact on the cost of health care in this state and a negative impact on the state tax resources. It is only 182 beds and I say that with qualification. But it is 182 beds more than we need at this point. We have done a study not only