

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Fowler.

SENATOR FOWLER: Mr. President, I rise to support Senator Simon's concept of a study on the nursing home industry. Dollar figures have been thrown about by the Health and Welfare Committee or their members, but I think that it might be worth while to look at how much public money goes to the nursing home industry, they're extensions really of state government, they are not state institutions as such. The state and local government, the cities, the county and the state and federal dollars flow to them through the medicaid program. Senator Schmit has several times on the appropriation bills said that we have not discussed these thoroughly. Probably one of the largest pieces of money in the state budget is the medicaid portion. We are talking about there tens, actually hundreds of millions of dollars in the State of Nebraska that are spent. An overwhelming percentage of those dollars go to nursing homes. So if we want to talk about whether it is worth \$50,000 or \$200,000 to develop a study of that industry I think that we have to compare that cost against how much the state government is already spending for nursing home services. Now I think that it is worthwhile to do a thorough review and I think surprise visits to one or two nursing homes or three or four by legislators probably can achieve the quality of study that we need. I don't think that maybe resolving one problem with one nursing home in the state gives me at least a full picture of the problem. I would hope that the Health and Welfare Committee would be concerned about these tens of millions of dollars, how those tens of millions of dollars are being spent, whether we are getting quality service, whether that is the most efficient way to spend those dollars, whether there are alternatives that could be developed such as home health care that might be more financially conservative, more financially able to provide services and yet actually may serve people better. I would hope those are the sorts of issues that may be addressed. I would hope that the committee would not be so short sighted as to say that well \$50,000 or \$75,000 we might not get a good consultant and we might not produce anything therefore we are not going to look at the problem. Serving on the Appropriations Committee seeing that the medicaid budget is larger than the state expenditure for roads, seeing that the medicaid budget is now larger than the state general funds for the university, seeing that those types of things are going on then I think that certainly nursing homes are deserving of study. I think that Senator Simon deserves an opportunity to develop such a study. I think that the Health and Welfare Committee should be interested in working with other senators and other