

amendments, Mr. President.

SPEAKER NICHOL: The committee amendments have been adopted. Senator Wesely, do you want to tell us a little about the bill?

SENATOR WESELY: Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members, it is a pleasure to present LB 87 to you, co-sponsored by Senator Schmit. LB 87 deals with...and here is Senator Schmit, it deals with the family support act, the disabled persons and family support act. It is a bill that Senator Schmit and I passed back in 1981. It is a bill that I feel very, very good about and has been a very successful program in the state. When passed back in 1981 it was a pilot program and it was given a sunset to see how it worked and went the first couple of years without funding because it was a program that was new and the budgets were tight. And then we have had an opportunity though through the assistance of Gina Dunning, the Director of the Department of Social Services, some money was made available from Title 20 funds. She was very helpful in this matter recognizing the benefits of this program. And so for the past year we have had approximately a hundred thousand dollars available and spent through that program for this. So we have been able to fund the program and have found, in fact, just as Senator Schmit and I thought back a few years ago it would be a big success. The concept is simple. When somebody has a disability, a handicap, what have you, instead of going out and finding a job and then losing their benefits as the result of having that extra income, we wanted to encourage that handicapped or disabled person to go out and find work and not completely lose all those services that they have provided for them. This would provide some minimal assistance to allow those people to maintain their independent living and to yet still provide for an opportunity to go out and work. So it would encourage these individuals to work and earn income and not lose all their benefits. The other thing that the bill did was to help those families that have disabled members, retarded or otherwise, who they don't want to put in an institution but would rather care for them in their own home. However, it is expensive and difficult to do that. We all know that, but we don't want to discourage families from staying together, yet we had policies that did that. If the family member was placed in an institution, they were taken care of. If they were kept at home, well, then the