

CLERK: 25 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of committee amendments to the bill, Mr. President. (See page 1594 of the Legislative Journal.)

SPEAKER NICHOL: The committee amendments as amended are adopted. Back to the bill. Senator Vard Johnson.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the body, LB 201 deals with a fairly difficult question, but a very, very important social issue. It deals with something that I'm going to call the high-risk pregnancy. It deals with maternal and infant health care and it's a bill that's got a price tag. It is a bill that would create a new state program. So it's got a lot of red flags that you all ought to be really attentive to and yet as they are reduced one at a time you ought to vote unanimously for this measure and the reason is very simple. We have women in the State of Nebraska who are carrying infants, carrying babies to term who will give birth and those babies will have some kind of a defect or a problem or they may die during the first year of their life. And we have come to learn over the years through medical evidence that a number of defects, a number of handicapping conditions and a number of premature deaths can be eliminated if we simply provide the woman during pregnancy with additional social support and medical support. So LB 201 is a very conscientious attempt to make certain that the Department of Health is able to enter into contracts and grants and aid to needy pregnant women when their physicians certify that they are a kind of a person with a high-risk pregnancy, i.e., a diabetic. A diabetic is a woman who, ah, for sure I, has a pregnancy more likely than not to result in some problem to the baby. The grant can go to the medical provider or to the woman so that the person will have some support medically or otherwise to assist in bringing that baby or that fetus to term, once to term we expect a healthy birth. The state of Nebraska today spends about \$70 million annually, I've got it laid out in your material, about \$70 million annually in providing for the retarded, in providing for the physically handicapped, in providing for lots and lots of children with problems. Again, according to the best evidence that we have those problems could have been reduced significantly in many cases if we had a respectable support structure for the mothers as they were carrying the infants to term.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Excuse me, Senator Johnson. (Gavel.)