

let 201 sit and see what happens. Thank you.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Withem and then Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WITHEM: Mr. President, members of the body, I was originally not going to speak on this bill. I am supportive of it. I heard it in committee, voted to advance it, very supportive of the concept, but I wasn't going to speak on it until this morning when I was driving down, I happened to have the radio on to a news program called "The Morning Edition". It's part of the public radio program. On that program a commentator was talking about the United States and the problem we have in the United States with infant mortality. Infant mortality is, of course, not something that gets an awful lot of headlines according to this individual. It's not like the space program I think he was putting a comparison to. It's not like a lot of other programs, but he did point out a fact that I didn't realize even after having heard the... Senator Johnson's excellent testimony at the hearing. Maybe I wasn't listening, Senator Johnson. But he pointed out in the United States last year the rate of improvement that we have in this country in infant mortality has declined considerably. And even more important, for those children one month of age to one year of age we've actually had an increase in the amount of mortality among those people. He also pointed out that prenatal care can solve an awful lot of these problems if the pregnant mother has the proper type of medical attention, nutritional advice, other sorts of things that go on in the prenatal period, much, if not all of these problems can be solved. And then he talked about dollars and I think this is a very, very significant statistic I'd appreciate it if you'd listen to. This individual said that the typical prenatal care that a mother retains costs approximately a total of \$600. Now, obviously, we have extreme cases where it is much more than that, but the average prenatal care is approximately \$600. Contrast that to the type of care, the cost that it takes to keep alive a child that is born with a significant birth defect, sometimes reaching \$1,000 a day. It is \$1,000 a day versus \$600 total. I think what Senator Johnson is offering to us, obviously, will not solve this problem totally. We can never pass a bill that solves every problem, however, what it does is it puts the State of Nebraska on record of addressing this very serious problem and it takes a very giant step towards putting a program into place that will