

SENATOR BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. President, and members, the committee amendments to 718...first of all, this is a miscellaneous claims bill which we traditionally go through every year to approve claims against the State of Nebraska. The committee amendments themselves clarify the source of payment regarding two claims. One would be paid from cash funds rather than general funds. The other is a correction of an oversight in preparing the bill. Secondly, we delete a claim brought by an insurance company for a mortgage that it held on property which was condemned by the State of Nebraska for highway construction. The State Claims Board was a little confused in their testimony and the Business and Labor Committee simply decided that we were not willing to approve the claim. Finally, we included a payment for 26 outdated state warrants. The State Claims Board originally denied the claims for these warrants and cited a two-year statute of limitations as the reason. Several citizens appeared before our committee and we had a good public hearing. They did object to the denial of the claims and the committee decided to approve the claims for the warrants first when they had been issued to an individual citizen as opposed to a corporation. And, secondly, records in the State Treasurer's office show that no duplicate warrant had been issued or paid. I would move the adoption of the committee amendments.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Wesely, please. Did you wish to speak on the amendments?

SENATOR WESELY: Yes. I would like to be a member of the Business and Labor Committee. It was an interesting process we went through and Senator Warner I am giving credit to in part and Senator Chambers and some other people that got a hold of us saying that the Claims Board had changed policy in midstream, so to speak, and this is a better approach. I think Senator Barrett explained very well the situation and I think this is a fairer thing to do for these individuals. Clearly, we can identify that they did not get paid. It is money that we owe them and just decided that we weren't going to pay them, but I think, in fact, if we owe them the money and we can clearly identify that they have been paid, then why don't we meet our obligations. So this is an important amendment and I think a policy that is a good one and hopefully the Claims Board will understand our intent and our concerns and try to respect the fact that when the state owes people money that we pay our bills.