

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Hoagland.

SENATOR HOAGLAND: In light of Senator Lamb's absence, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that that amendment be passed over.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Hefner, are you going to handle that for Senator Lamb?

SENATOR HEFNER: Mr. President and members of the body, I don't think that Senator Lamb wanted us to skip over that. The last time I visited with him, why he said that he wanted us to take it up. And it is true, I will try to explain it a little bit.

SPEAKER NICHOL: All right.

SENATOR HEFNER: I am not as well versed as I should be on it but this amendment, Senator Lamb's amendment, is printed on page 846 of the Journal, page 846 of the Journal. And what it says, in counties with a population of less than 45,000 people participate in pretrial diversion programs established pursuant to Section 29-3602 as requested by the judges of the probation district in which he or she serves. I know that the probation administrator, Robert Keller, wrote a letter opposing this, but here are some of the things that we need to consider. Probation officers objecting to getting involved in helping youthful offenders should realize that the State of Nebraska is facing tough economic times. They need to realize that if they don't wish to carry out their duties to help young people to get straightened out, they should step aside and let others more energetic fill their positions then. Helping young people to keep out of our institutions should be their prime objective. Money and time invested in our young people isn't a cost, it is an investment. And I certainly want to commend Senator Lamb for bringing this to our attentions. I feel that we should support this amendment to allow county attorneys to use probation officers to help first-time youthful offenders. This would apply only to counties. It would apply only to counties below 45,000 population. The county attorney in Cherry County, and that is just one county that we know of, has been using probation officers in this manner and it has been working real well. The law needs to be amended to make the program comply with the law and, therefore, I would urge for your support in Senator