

reassessing the demographics of the United States, reassessing the economics that are involved here, that it is absolutely critical that we take a second look at this issue and give this commission a chance to do what I believe only it can do in the State of Nebraska. I think it is important that we review some of the facts here. For a long time now I have been something of a student of demographics, where the country is going, how the population is changing, who is getting richer, who is getting poorer. In the United States today the fastest growing segment of the population is comprised of women, 65 and older, they are also the single poorest group. The 1980 median income figure for women was \$4,226, that is only \$176 against the official poverty level, with the poverty rate of women 60 percent higher than that of men. Income drops as much as 42 percent upon widowhood. Like insurance benefits are often depleted within two years. A third of all widows live below the poverty level. Another trend that is going on in this country today, whether we like it or not, it would be nice if every kid had a traditional family with two parents, which most of us still cherish as the ideal of a family, but as we all know that isn't the case. Single parenthood among females is becoming more common every decade. About 12 percent of Nebraska's families with minor children were headed by single females in 1980. That is up from 4.9 percent in 1960, and 7.4 percent in 1970. Single males headed only 2 percent of the families with children. In Nebraska, in Nebraska an estimated 52,800 minor children lived in single parent households in 1980. Nebraska families, headed by a female, with no husband or father present, were almost four times more likely to live below the poverty level than those with a husband or father present. Recently there was an article in the Lincoln Star that talked about poverty among children in this state. More than 1 out of every 8 children in Nebraska lives in poverty today. That is about 50,000 children. Public and private resources have been shrinking to assist groups that are most affected by these trends. On the national level we've already started about problems with generational equity. I think we have a very serious and very negative trend at work here that is in fact a social issue and also an economic issue. And if we fail to address these issues, we, as a nation, will pay for this down the road. It seems to me that the \$98,000 that is being asked for here, which I believe will directly affect our ability to address that problem in Nebraska, is a wise and sound investment. For