

themselves. And Senator Chronister's amendment, this amendment is an extension of that principle to be sure that the needy individuals in our population of 1.5 million in Nebraska have the same educational opportunities that the wealthier individuals have. It is just a matter of basic fairness and I think we can surely afford a budget of \$1.4 million to assure that our needy students throughout the state have that opportunity to go to college, that single opportunity that is so important and is so life-shaping in terms of options, in terms of what individuals have before them in the future. Most of us in this body, whether we are members of the Legislature or staff or members of the press corps have had the benefit of college educations and we understand how crucial it is in this complex world. And I think it is very important for us to be sure that we don't have needy students out there, needy individuals, needy high school graduates in this state that are not able to obtain a college education solely on the basis of financial need. The second major gap that this amendment would fill is it would allow the independent colleges in Nebraska to participate in state aid programs because, as I understand it, under current law all of the state aid funds are funneled through public institutions. Now, most states have provisions for students, needy students attending private schools to receive aid. In Nebraska, by and large, we don't and this discourages the development, the flourishing of our independent college system. And we are not...Senator Chronister and others of us who are proponents of this concept are not arguing that we should give state funds to independent colleges. This amendment by no means does that. But this amendment would allow state funds to go to needy students who may themselves choose to attend an independent college and thereby indirectly helping our independent colleges to flourish and to continue to grow and in many cases simply to continue to exist in the State of Nebraska. Now, it is not often that we stand here and it certainly has not been the case in recent years that any of us have stood here and asked the Legislature to appropriate new funds for a new program of one sort or another. The last several years has been a scenario of cutting here and cutting there. But I think when we settle back and look at the basic principles that Nebraskans have stood for through the years, we inevitably recognize that we have got to provide educational opportunity. And if there are needy students out there who are qualified to receive college educations but who are not receiving college educations solely on the basis of need, why we need to step in where the federal government is stepping out and be sure that those students are not going to be shortshrifed, to be sure they are