

**SENATOR BAACK:** Mr. Speaker and colleagues, I, too, rise to support this amendment presented by Senator Nichol. I think Senator Nichol did a good job of explaining what the amendment is about and talking about how it is something that is really needed in western Nebraska. This hospital does not just provide services to the Scottsbluff area. It provides it for the whole Panhandle region. So I think this makes it all the more necessary that we have this program for nurses out there. Some of the figures show that 92 percent of the nurses that graduate from WNGH now stay right in the Panhandle area to work, so I think it provides an extremely good service for western Nebraska. And I think that this whole amendment makes a lot more sense than possibly even trying to set up a program at the nearest four-year state college which would be Chadron. I think this would be a better way to go, to set up the program there. They've already got a lot of the things in place and so I urge you to support this amendment. Thank you.

**SENATOR CARSTEN:** Thank you, Senator Baack. Senator Warner, please, on the Nichol amendment.

**SENATOR WARNER:** Mr. President, members of the Legislature, as has been explained, this is in effect to be a new program as far as the state funds participating and it would be correct to state that the basis for it, as Senator Nichol has pointed out, is to move toward a four-year degree in nursing to have available there. We did not include the 100,000 into the Med Center's appropriation and the reason I would say that we did not was of the hesitancy to start this new program which would be 100,000 for this year, estimated 250,000 additional funds next year and then finally reaching 600,000 the third year, 100,000 of which was to come from the hospital income, the state funds to be 500,000. Again, it is one of these programs that there is no question about the merit. With the basis for not including it in the budget originally was the built-in increase that would occur over the next three years and that's a growing amount each year.

**SENATOR CARSTEN:** Thank you, Senator Warner. Senator Jacklyn Smith, please, on the Nichol amendment.

**SENATOR SMITH:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the body, I rise to support Senator Nichol's amendment. I won't repeat any of the things that were already said, and they're all very, very good reasons why we need to support them. I would just simply