

marrow and right through to the core of our state and the sort of government and the sort of people we want to be in Nebraska. Because we are to a point and a crossroads where our future is going to be determined by the sort of cuts we're talking about here today. Now first off, on the specific item of the Legislative Council, we are a coequal branch of government. We are one of three branches of government charged with the major responsibility for setting public policy in this state. As a result we must have the tools and ability to do that job, that most important function. If you'll look at the materials, you'll see that the other branch of government, the executive branch is seeing some cuts across the board in a number of areas and I'll talk about that in a minute. But another branch of government, the judicial branch of government is hardly touched. They are exempted in part from the 3 percent across the board cut. They are recognized as having obligations. They are recognized as having the need to have adequate funding to carry out their functions in our three-part government here in the State of Nebraska. And I think we ought to recognize we ought to at least be on equal footing with them if not in a better position because of the cuts we took last May and so my feeling is that this is a fair proposal and it's not one that is extravagant but reasonable, in fact, and we ought to consider it very carefully. More than than, the specific cut of the State Ombudsman makes no sense whatsoever. That is a program that has been recognized nationally. There has been a book put out about it praising Nebraska. We're the second state, I believe, or the first to have a State Ombudsman. Many other states have followed. We were the pioneer in this area and it has worked well. There is no justification for getting rid of it and we're talking about putting it on the chopping block. That makes no sense. The long-term interest of this state is to have an Ombudsman, to look out for the interest of the public to try to look out for their concerns and help them as they work through the bureaucracy. That's why we have an Ombudsman, that's why it was started when Senator Schmit passed a bill, I think over 15 years ago and why we ought to continue that program in the future. Now just think a bit about some of your offices, and I don't know if you use that office as much as I do, but frequently I'll get calls and letters from the Correctional Institution wanting help on certain items. We have a corrections officer who is supposed to work on that and I defer those over to him and he has done an adequate job and it has saved my staff in my