

SENATOR WESELY: Mr. Speaker, members, I would oppose the committee amendment and ask your consideration to oppose it as well. The committee amendment does cut deeper than what the Governor's proposal had originally envisioned. Among the list of committee recommendations that I would have great difference with would include the Department of Public Institutions as an agency charged with the responsibility for the mentally retarded, the mentally ill and the alcoholic out here in the State of Nebraska needing assistance and services. Those are people that are very vulnerable. Those are people that are very in need of assistance and the programs that you are talking about through DPI are the very programs that help those most vulnerable among us in the State of Nebraska. The 1.5 percent cut is something that would be tolerable in terms of the DPI management and we did have a hearing in the Public Health and Welfare Committee to discuss that. 1.5 percent would still be in effect if you reject the committee amendment. The committee amendment goes from the 1.5 percent to 2.83 percent essentially giving them the same 3 percent cut that every other agency has, not recognizing the special needs for the Department of Public Institutions and those individuals that it serves. We recognize that previously. If you remember in some other across-the-board cuts it has been consistently the policy to leave DPI out of that across-the-board effort, whether its Corrections or whatever the other agencies are that we usually include in the exemption part of it. DPI is regularly involved in the exemption side because of the recognition that it is a program that you simply cannot cut away program, the institutions, the services and not expect to have a disruption in terms of the State of Nebraska. These people, if not provided the care that these services which we fund now provide, have to go somewhere. They cannot be left out on the streets in many cases and if they are, if we are forced in that situation, it is very bad not only for those individuals, but for the public at large. For instance, in the cuts that might be contemplated by the Department of Public Institutions, if we do keep the present committee plan, would be to close the Adolescent Care Unit at the Lincoln Regional Center. Now, under the proposal that they gave to us in the Public Health and Welfare Committee, a 2.9 cut, which we're talking 2.83 cut, would include closing this Adolescent Care Unit. These individuals, there are 32 of these adolescents. They are severely disturbed. They are disruptive adolescents and they are in need of