

Legislature to hold a public hearing on the proposed takeover of their system by the Department of Health. Currently, there are six divisions or six areas that they operate in across the state. The Department of Health would cut that down to two and would then become the supervising division for these folks. Senator Wesely has already graciously scheduled a hearing for, I think it is next Tuesday, excuse me, for Monday of next week at 3:00 p.m. So, the hearing is on line. The resolution does nothing more than give these people, who are going to be affected, there are over 4,000 members of the organizations that work in the direct first response area, basically, in the outstate, the rural areas of Nebraska. It is very important to the rural areas, the small communities. They all work on a volunteer basis. These folks would just have a chance to an open forum to discuss what they feel how they will be affected by this takeover by the Department of Health. We currently...they were given three weeks notice, asked to respond in that time. I am told that the Department of Health has received over 600 letters. What we are trying to do through the resolution is give them an opportunity to have a public hearing before the body of the Legislature that deals with the Department of Health, namely the Health and Human Services Committee. Senator Wesely has been gracious enough to already schedule that hearing for Monday. It is sort of a moot point right now, but I would just like to ask the body to support the resolution. Thank you.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Rod Johnson, then Senator Haberman. Excuse me, Senator Johnson, a moment. (Gavel.) Could we have it quiet in here so the members of the Legislature can hear the speakers. Thank you. Senator Rod Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members, I rise to support Senator Hall and commend him for bringing this to the Legislature. It is much more of a, I suppose, rural issue. But Senator Hall has been good enough to put together a resolution expressing the concerns of many of the EMTs around the State of Nebraska. I've had numerous contacts with those individuals who are deeply concerned with the situation with the Department of Health, and would really like their day in court, so to speak, and offer some alternative ideas. I think that is what Senator Hall is bringing to us, is that we have a public hearing, allow these individuals to come in and to express their viewpoints on the issue, and provide some alternative ideas to the program or the policy that has been developed by the Department of Health. So, as one of the