

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Okay, that being out of the way, what was the committee's motivation?

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Well, we have a situation which I think you have received numerous communications on over the last several months, starting in last session and probably before that. We have a situation in western Nebraska whereby there simply isn't access to the kind of nursing education programs that are needed now and will be needed in the future, and it is simply based on a need to establish a program so that rural Nebraska and people that need the kind of baccalaureate nursing training to continue to serve in the health professions are going to be trained and so that we are prepared to deal with what we expect to be very serious demands in the future. You are as aware as I am of the fact that we have an aging population in this nation and in this state and that trend is even more serious in rural Nebraska where the aging population is even a larger percentage of the total population. The one service that aging populations demand and need and deserve is quality health care. We have significant health care problems in rural Nebraska right now, Senator Chambers, that you may be aware of anyway since you have taken an interest in rural issues and this, to me, is just good, sound planning to help us meet what will continue to be a serious need in the area. I could compare this, for instance, to...

SENATOR CHAMBERS: We can carry on the discussion, I'm not cutting you off, but I want to focus in some more, if I may. I supported this program when it was going through originally, so the issue is not the merit or the value of the program because other programs that were cut have equally strong arguments in their behalf. So what I am asking for is the committee's rationale in sparing this program while not sparing the others.

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Our rationale is, frankly, Senator Chambers, that we have geared something up and it would have been simple enough, I suppose, to just whack the 100,000 and tell the University you will do this. That has not generally been the philosophy of the committee that when we tell somebody to do something to start a program we try to fund it. Sometimes that happens here on the floor. When it does, I think that is the wrong way to do it. Our philosophy was if we are going to do it, we need to fund it.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Is this program felt by the committee to be