

Legislature, so that we can deal with this in a calm, sensible way, I suggest that we just look at the nursing program there for what it is, not a political thing, not east versus west, anything of that nature, but to look at it for what it really can do. I heard yesterday that somebody had informed one of the members of the Legislature that West Nebraska General Hospital was about to close. Well, I tell you that West Nebraska General Hospital is the biggest business in Scotts Bluff County. It may be the biggest business in the Panhandle, I don't know. Has over 800 employees, serves largely the Panhandle, some east of the Panhandle, South Dakota, part of Wyoming, some of Colorado, a little bit of Kansas, not much of Kansas. It serves a large area. It is a going concern. It's not going to go broke. It is supported heavily by local money. By that I mean just not too long ago, like two or three years ago, 11 million bucks was raised in that area to build an addition on the hospital, not at Nebraska's expense, not at federal expense. It has had a baccalaureate degree in nursing, that is the three-year course, for 63 years. It is not a new program you're talking about. The three-year baccalaureate program, as I understand it, is not acceptable in the medical profession any more for nurses. It must be a four-year course because the University of Nebraska has been looking at this for approximately four years to do it in connection with the University of Nebraska and that is the program that has worked out. So it is not a situation of a new helter-skelter deal where suddenly something is thrown together to ask for it to come to fruition. Lastly, as far as I would say, the facilities are all intact. There will be no needed buildings built, no renovation of the building that it would be in. It's all intact, it's nearly new, it's in good shape so you will not be blowing money on the facilities in the future. The nearest school, the nearest four-year school is Kearney, Nebraska, which is nearly 300 miles away. With the area that it does serve and the money that it does bring into the area, it certainly should be worth the small amount we're asking to support this facility. I think it has merit. I think it is deserving. I think it is the fair thing to do and I ask you to support it. With this, I'd give the remainder of my closing to Senator Scofield.

SENATOR CARSTEN: Senator Scofield, please.

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I think Senator Nichol has done a good job in bringing this discussion back on what we ought to really be focusing and I know that you're all struggling in here trying to be fiscally