

February 23, 1996 LB 1248

me, they have a regis...a reputation of being prudent in the way they spend their money. Last April the county was forced to establish a \$200,000 line of credit with local banks as they were authorized to do by statute. In order to keep the Lotter-Nissen trial moving along, the line of credit that they have...now are using has to be repaid within one year. You have to understand that Richardson County has tried to deal with their financial situation as reasonably as they can. This is a county which has reluctantly raised its property taxes and levies as much as they could each year, which is now approaching fifty cents which is the statutory limit on county's levies. They depleted their inheritance tax funds which they had a great deal of inheritance tax fund in the neighborhood of 800,000, and all their reserves last year in trying to avoid borrowing money. And they didn't spend this money frivolously, they spent it the way it had to be spent merely to repair some of the roads that had to be done, some of the flood damage that had to be taken care of and, of course, to maintain the infrastructure with the money that they had on hand, and to pay for all the criminal justice costs that were required, that were required of them. If they...if the county were ever to meet the definition of catastrophic financial emergency, I'm sure that most all of you would agree that Richardson County does. LB 1248 is not intended to be a property tax relief bill, and certainly it's not a backdoor approach to provide more state aid to counties and...

SENATOR CROSBY: One minute.

SENATOR VRTISKA: ...cities. What LB 1248 does is give the state, through the Governor, a way to assist our local governments when they find themselves in financial straits due to circumstances out of their control. Most of us recognize that Nebraska is a, certainly a compassionate...the people in Nebraska are compassionate and they're willing to lend a hand when there's a hand that needs to be handed out to those people who, who have suffered these tremendous losses due to natural disasters and through lawsuits and et cetera that's gone on in these counties. These are certainly situations that the county had no control over and it could, as I stated earlier, it could happen to any county in the state, any village, any city could certainly incur these kinds of expenses when they could find a way to meet their obligations. And as I said earlier, Richardson County...