

1% goes to the state to be used for tourism, development of tourism; 2% is optional at the county level. That money also, if the county board goes ahead and sets up the particular system and goes through the hoops and loops they could then, in that county, have a 2% lodging tax that would have to go to tourism. There are certain protections in the bill designed to make sure the money isn't squandered or doesn't really go for the purpose. Prohibitions, for example, against using it for capital construction. 1% as I say, is mandatory. 2% is optional. 1% goes to the state. 2% if the county board chose to do it would go to the county to be handled by that county under the proper procedures for development of tourism. I urge you to adopt the amendment. The original amendment or the original bill was broader in scope, had to do with highway signs, as you know I have been concerned about those for a number of years, some other things. What it is now is simply that the tourism industry, the lodging industry has faced up to the fact that the gas crisis, the other things have put them in serious trouble. The lodging industry in this state or the tourism industry in this state, for your interest is one of the truly big industries and one that we should protect. Additionally we are paying, Nebraskans are paying much higher taxes in other states for lodging to develop their tourism. We estimate from the Department of Tourism, Department of... whatever it is called here, Economic Development, whatever, anyway that a little over half of this money theoretically from the information we have would be coming from out of state people. Now so you all know my position on this, I am strongly supporting, strongly supporting the amendment and I am strongly supporting the bill, however, so that I answer the question you were going to ask, somebody would ask, well didn't you oppose it in the past? I not only opposed it, I killed it pretty consistently every year, worked with you people to kill it. Things have changed. The bill is completely changed in nature. For example, I felt there were not enough adequate controls in the past. There was not enough direction. The lodging industry in the past was violently opposed to the bill. For the first time this year the lodging industry voted, voted heavily, to actually support this system. I think a number of you may have been contacted by one Chamber of Commerce or another to explain that they also support it. I know it is a bill that is going to be fraught with opposition, violent opposition, but when all is said and done, I hope we muster 25 votes. I think it is a good amendment. I urge you to adopt the amendment.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Vickers.