

March 19, 1980

LB 1002

SENATOR LEWIS: That wasn't meant as criticism for you. I want to make that clear that I knew that.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Fowler.

SENATOR FOWLER: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I rise to oppose Senator Sieck's amendment. When there was word out that perhaps in the Appropriations Committee we had overfunded the water conservation fund, that money was being turned back, I felt it important to look into that because I felt that here might be a chance to take \$500,000 out of their budget and free it up for floor amendments and I thought that maybe there would be a chance to cut this program back. If we are overfunding it, certainly we should cut the water conservation fund back but I had difficulty finding out how much had been requested from the NRDs to the Natural Resource Commission. It seems, and this is based on information in visiting with fiscal staff, it seems what happens is whatever amount of money that we have appropriated in this water conservation fund the Natural Resource Commission divides evenly among every Natural Resource District and provides it to them to spend. Now at the end of the last fiscal year, sixteen of the Natural Resource Districts had spent just about everything we gave them, five of the Natural Resource Districts had just very, very small amounts of the allocation left and five or six, I think, or three or four did have considerable sums left. Recognizing that, the Natural Resource Commission this year allocated again back in equal amount to each Natural Resource District but said halfway through the year, at the end of six months, if there is money that has not been used by a Natural Resource District and is not obligated, we will take that back and we will redivide that. I think that is where we get the figure and the discussion that this year there is money that is not being used. Certain Natural Resource Districts are not using the money that they are given but other Natural Resource Districts are using all the money they are given and in fact want more money. In the Appropriations Committee, we abolished the discretionary fund because in fact no discretion was being used. The Natural Resource Commission has a bias and that bias is to the development fund. The \$500,000 in the discretionary fund last year, over 80% of that went into the development fund, less than twenty went to this water conservation fund. There is no point in having a discretionary fund if no one intends to use discretion. Senator Sieck and the Natural Resource Commission would be much more honest to put that million dollars where in fact it is going to be spent, in the resource development