

March 31, 1980

LB 361

CLERK: Mr. President, the next amendment is by Senator Landis and it is on page 139⁸ of the Journal.

Mr. President, Senator Schmit moves to amend LB 361 by increasing the gas tax by two and a half cents which I think would put it at twelve and a half cents.

SPEAKER MARVEL: The Chair recognizes Senator Schmit.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, I know that it is not popular to stand here and ask for an increase in taxes but I think that the public recognizes that the rather rapid escalation of the cost of fuel is going to continue until something breaks somewhere along the line. In the meantime in the past five years we have seen as much as a 300% increase in the cost of road construction. We have placed an almost intolerable burden upon our Department of Roads. It is absolutely impossible to maintain, let alone build any new roads or highways at the present time. Our cities and our counties have problems that exceed some of their wildest expectations of a few years ago. In many of our rural counties we find bridges which do no longer meet the specifications laid down by this Legislature in 1969 when I first came to this body. I believe Butler County has closed twenty-nine of their bridges as being unsafe for travel based upon recommendations of engineering studies that were adopted by this Legislature. We find our cities in much of the same problem and the cities are screaming for revenue in much the same voice as are the counties. Each morning as I drive to Lincoln I try to take a different road if I can and I find the same deteriorated condition whether it is a township road, a county road or a state highway. I do not like to vote for increased taxes any more than anyone else but I think that unless we recognize that we are going to have these increases in the cost of construction and take positive steps to meet those increased costs that we are going to find ourself a way way behind very soon. Now those of you who are going to...and I know we are all concerned, but if you would argue against this amendment then I think you are going to have a hard time doing it with a straight face because we have watched the price of gasoline escalate since we have been down here by more than ten cents, by more than ten cents, ladies and gentlemen. We are promised, again, by our federal officials and by the petroleum companies, notwithstanding the fact that they do concede that there is a slight surplus of petroleum at this time, we are promised dollar and a half, dollar seventy-five gasoline by fall with corresponding increases