

SENATOR BEUTLER: Okay, thank you. I'm interested in this particular bill and one thing that has always bothered me about how we go about addressing the subject of alcohol, and I'm getting off on a different subject now I guess, but it's just the general idea that somehow as a general matter the people who consume alcohol are those who are responsible for all of the alcohol problems in this society and they are the ones who should pay for it, but by and large the consumers of alcohol do not cause the alcohol problems and to turn around and tax them heavily for the payment of those problems simply because they consume alcohol moderately, to me doesn't make any sense. The taxes on alcohol are truly disproportionate now. I think everybody would agree upon that in terms of the taxes on alcohol versus the taxes on other products. If I am a mild consumer of alcohol, I didn't cause somebody else's alcohol problem and his or her rehabilitation and the ensuing cost to society any more than a person who consumes no alcohol at all and, therefore, it seems to me that the more appropriate thing to do is to tax society generally for that problem because it is society generally that allows that problem to develop rather than to tax specifically and more heavily equally innocent people who are the mild or moderate or reasonable consumers of alcohol. You know all those people are the ones who are paying for this as well, of course, as the guilty ones who overdo the situation. It's true in part that those who truly cause the problem, who truly have the alcoholism problem, are caused to pay more of their own cost by taxing that which they consume more heavily, but it also at the same time...

SENATOR MARSH: Thirty seconds.

SENATOR BEUTLER: ...in a larger sense is causing a very unfair taxation upon those who consume alcohol products moderately, and I'm not sure I'm going to vote for this. Thank you.

SENATOR MARSH: I would like to introduce guests of Senator Sieck who are seated under the north balcony, Patty Ayers from York, Nebraska, and her daughters, Christie and Kara and her son, Ken. Would you please stand. Senator Pirsch.

SENATOR PIRSCH: A clarification, Senator Marsh. We are speaking to the amendment, are we not?