

SPEAKER NICHOL: Is there any further discussion on the committee amendments? I have some lights on from the last bill. Would you please turn them off so I can tell. Senator Schmit, did you wish to speak about the committee amendments? Okay, just a minute.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I'll be very brief at this time. I support the committee amendments. I believe that they are specific to the point that satisfies the concerns of some individuals. I will have some more to say about the bill later on. I'd just like to say this, that we do have some resources available to us. All of us know the serious financial situation which impacts agriculture and many of the ag oriented industries. I believe it is imperative that we advance the bill and that we do so with the amendments as it came from the Ag and Environment Committee.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Warner, did you wish to speak about the committee amendments, please?

SENATOR WARNER: Mr. President, I'd rise to oppose the committee amendment, as far as that goes, the bill itself. If you're going to go by the principle of checkoff funds to be used for lobbying purposes, it doesn't make any difference if it's a 100 percent or 25 percent, that the principle is, should checkoff funds be used for lobbying? I strongly believe they should not. I pay checkoff funds. If I want to lobby, then I should join the Corn Growers or the Stock Growers or whatever group that I voluntarily join to do the lobbying. Checkoff funds should be for the sole purpose of market production and cannot be used, should not be used for lobbying purposes at any level. I appreciate the problems that people argue why it should be done, but the fact remains that if you're going to mandate people, and in some cases you can't get a refund, maybe their amendment proposes that you can, but in any event then you've got to sort out what they are doing with the lobbying money and there is no way for the individual farmer to know that, especially at the federal level. So I would oppose the committee amendment because that doesn't do anything as far as the principle that is involved. This purports to do something, but it doesn't and I would urge you to reject the committee amendment, reject the bill and let lobbying be a volunteer thing that individuals contribute to if they wish