

welcome you to your Nebraska Legislature. We're just beginning discussion on a...continuing discussion on a beef checkoff bill and amendments there to. The Chair recognizes Senator Haberman.

SENATOR HABERMAN: Mr. President, members of the body, basically the bill will do three things. First of all it gives the citizens a right of choice, which they don't have now, which we all believe in, but we've taken it away from them. So this would give them the right of choice. Secondly, it does not make it voluntary. It does not make it voluntary. It is still a mandatory checkoff. They have to request a refund. A lot of people will not do that. The wheat farmers, like my example, have been paying it for 30, 32 years, we won't ask for a refund. We've been paying it so long it's automatically taken out, and we won't do it. But maybe the most important thing that this bill would do, just quite possibly it would do this, if there were a drop in revenue, and everybody is afraid that there will be, so let's just for the sake of conversation assume that there is a drop in revenue. Quite possibly this could then force all of those checkoff boards to join together as a unit with their money, have every board represented on an executive board and have one executive director, pool their funds, unite all of those boards and then what are they going to do? They are going to sell agriculture, sell Nebraska agriculture. We won't have two offices in Taiwan, three in Washington, four some place else. They will be working together as a unit, which they should do. If nothing else it forces them to pool their money and come together to sell agriculture because when you sell beef you are helping the corn people. If you sell corn, you are helping the beef people. If you sell soybeans, you sell pigs, you sell wheat, I don't care what it is, you are helping agriculture. As it is now they are like a flock of quail, they are all protecting their own little turf, all their own little executive directors, and all their little old travel budgets, and all their little old special people they put money out to, they don't want to lose this. Well, I wouldn't either if I were them. But it isn't the right thing. Consolidation, power, you get power through money. By putting their money together and consolidating they will have more power, influence more legislation and sell more agriculture for the State of Nebraska than they ever could before. At least it is worth a try. So I would say let's support Senator Vickers's amendment and go with it. Let's