

SPEAKER NICHOL: The bill is advanced. LB 217.

CLERK: Mr. President, 217 was a bill introduced by Senators Beutler and Landis. (Title read.) The bill was originally read on January 15 of last year. It was referred to the Agriculture and Environment Committee for hearing. The bill was advanced to General File. I do have Agriculture and Environment Committee amendments pending.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Rod Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. President, members, I think this is one of the more significant water quality bills that this body will address during the coming year and it sets up a Petroleum Products and Hazardous Substance Storage and Handling Act introduced by both Senator Beutler and Senator Landis. The purpose of the bill is to provide for registration, inspection of underground fuel storage tanks and containers. The bill itself provides that persons owning tanks or containers need to secure a permit from the State Fire Marshal to license these containers and to place the funds that are collected from a fee that will be collected into a Hazardous Substance Storage and Handling Fund that will be administered by the Department of Environmental Control. Right now it is estimated there might be as many as 35,000 tanks or storage facilities, underground storage facilities in this state and I think the Fire Marshal's Office and the Department of Environmental Control are deeply concerned with the potential disaster or contamination of ground water if we're not regulating and finding out exactly where these tanks are located, what is stored in those tanks and in case a disaster happens, what plans could be set up to clean up the underground water, if in fact, that is what has been contaminated. If it is found that a tank has contaminated the ground water or the ground soil, the owner of that tank will be held responsible financially. If a point source is not located, then DEC will come in and do their best to try and pay for the cleanup. Now, during the course of the year after the most recent session, my staff and a variety of people including Senator Beutler's staff, Senator Vickers' staff, the Fire Marshal's Office, DEC, a variety of people have been working on this bill to try and clean it up and make it as good as possible. In doing so we have decided to replace the committee amendments that were put on the bill with alternative amendments that I think are being printed right