

those lines, LB 849. Senator Schmit and I and a few others have our name on a bill that would set up a larger mechanism to allow land to be purchased by the government but to be set aside for conservation and environmental purposes. But I would remind you that the State of Nebraska, through the Board of Educational Lands and Funds, has owned land since the beginning of this state. And yes, as was pointed out by Senator Haberman, the income from that land is dedicated to the State School Trust Fund, it is used by the schools throughout the State of Nebraska. When we presented this bill to the Banking Committee, as Senator Johnson pointed out to you, we offered to them an amendment that would have indicated that the Board of Educational Lands and Funds could not buy more land in those townships where they already have 1,280 acres. It is not my intention, nor do I think it was Senator Johnson's intention, to allow the Board of Educational Lands and Funds to buy more land where they already still have their land, but instead to allow them, at their discretion, to go back into the market in those areas where the lands have been sold off. Now I would tell you, if those lands hadn't been sold off, we probably wouldn't have nearly the funding problems that this state has right now for the support of the public schools. Now you can make an argument that says that we are not making a lot of money off of agriculture. But if you don't owe any money on it, if you don't have to pay any interest on it, if you didn't have to borrow the money and buy the land when it was very...real expensive, even yet today agricultural land is returning some profit, and it is returning some profit to the Board of Educational Lands and Funds. The schools of this state are benefiting from it. Now I have those philosophical qualms as well about the state or government owning property, but under limited purchases, under a mechanism that says you cannot own more than 1,120 acres in any township, back to the original purpose of the Board of Educational Lands and Funds, I see no big reason why this Legislature should not give that authority back to that board. Now I agree that that would not, it would not put a floor on the price of land. It would not set up a mechanism where the land wouldn't go down anymore, but it would help.

PRESIDENT: One minute.

SENATOR VICKERS: Now I might be the only one in this body that has direct contact to that, and I ought to say so right up front. We happen, on our place, to have a lease on one