

SENATOR VICKERS: Thank you, Mr. President. I'll go ahead and speak to the committee amendments. I would also urge the adoption of the committee amendments. The bill has been well explained by Senator Schmit. The issue is, in my mind at least, very clear. This is probably the most important bill in terms of economic development, which is a great buzz word this year, that we could pass in this Legislature this session. And the committee amendments, in my opinion, make this good bill even much better, and let me explain why I say that. The general intent of the bill, as explained by Senator Schmit so eloquently, is to set up a mechanism to encourage the development of ethanol production in the State of Nebraska, to encourage another market for the grains produced within this state, and to do it in a fashion that the producers of that product, of those grains, can share in the profits from these ethanol plants. That, of course, is the...one of the main reasons for the use of the public power districts, to be involved in this endeavor, so that those profits can be enjoyed, in many cases, by those producers. Now, I certainly endorse all of that concept. I did have some problems, even though my name is on the bill, I had some real problems with the initial bill because of the 10 cent a bushel check-off on those grains to help put up the funds for the feasibility studies and for the up front monies for the construction of these plants. The amended bill, the committee amendments lower that to 1.5 cents for this year, and one cent for next year and thereafter. That is much more preferable, in my opinion, than the original green bill...copy of the bill. However, I need to, at the same time, say that it would be my preference, and I will be looking very closely at this bill between now and Select File, to see if there is a way we can perhaps get some funds from a more broader source. Because, as I indicated to the committee at one of the hearings on this bill, I believe everybody in the State of Nebraska, both urban and rural, will benefit in terms of economic development from the enactment of this piece of legislation and by the building of ethanol plants across this state. Any economic activity of that magnitude that brings in new revenues, increased revenues to this state, has got to be good for all of us in the State of Nebraska. And it seems unfair to me to ask those people who are already suffering some very difficult economic times to fund the up front money, and to fund the feasibility studies totally by themselves. So I would...I'll be searching for other sources of revenue. Quite frankly, we do have some other bills in here where we are putting in some General Fund monies and calling it economic