

that they can then pass on their authority to the problem onto the Department of Environmental Control to use their resources to clean up the problem or to take steps to clean up that problem.

PRESIDENT: You've heard Senator Johnson explain his amendment. Senator Schmit.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President and members, I would have to oppose the amendment. I think it is important the natural resource districts do enforce the action of the bill. I believe it indicates that perhaps if some of them don't want to do it, maybe they should be merged with others, or have some other kind of an operation. But the first line out there is the natural resource district. We established them for the purpose of protecting our soil, water and natural resources. The DEC is a backup position as a state agency, but we had a lot of emphasis upon local control and I believe that we ought to reinforce that. I think it is very important that we recognize that this subdivision of government was created for a specific purpose, not for that which they might decide to do upon their own. Sure, I agree with tree planting, and I agree with bird watching, and a few other things, but when it comes right down to it the gut issue is soil and water and that is what this bill is about. There were 15 people, 15 different agencies, and individuals appeared in support of the bill. And not one opposed the bill. I would have to say that if this were a part of the original language, I think we would have had some serious opposition. The bill was a bill that took many, many hours, hundreds of hours of consultation, discussion, debate and it was a bill which I feel is probably one of the best worked out bills that I've ever worked on in this Legislature. I can understand what Senator Johnson is trying to do. I understand his concern. But I'd have to oppose it and ask you to oppose it.

PRESIDENT: Is there further discussion on the Johnson amendment? If not, you may close, Senator Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. President. I'm sorry for the confusion earlier. What I am trying to do, I am not against what Senator Schmit is proposing in the bill, that the natural resource districts, the local entities involved in this process, have the authority to make decisions. But, as we all know, natural resource districts vary in their carrying out of rules and regulations and programs in this state. And I just simply wanted to fall back for protection, if you will, to the bill