

SENATOR HEFNER: Mr. President and members of the body, I'm going to talk mostly on the second part of the amendment and that is the sales tax on motor vehicles. I don't think we should take the sales tax from motor vehicles and put it in the General Fund. We need this money very much in the Highway Trust Fund. This Highway Trust Fund money is divided between the state, and the counties, and the cities. We can certainly use it in the rebuilding of our roads, bridges, and streets. Senator Landis mentioned that this would be a cap on motor vehicles, the sales tax on motor vehicles. Well I don't see any cap on it. I would say the cap would be on the amount of money that goes to the Highway Trust Fund. But here in Nebraska we have many miles of highways. I think we have over, or approximately about 10,000 on our state highway system. Now up in my area, in northeast Nebraska, we certainly need to do a lot of road rebuilding. Also we need to do a lot of widening of the bridges because they were built in the 1940s and 1950s, and they are very narrow. Also I think that if we keep or build a good road system it will add to the economic development in our state. And we certainly need that in these difficult economic times. Also let me tell you this, that the sales of gasoline is dropping. We have more fuel efficient cars, so it is dropping. So we are not bringing in as much money as we would like to see so that we can rebuild our roads. Also the sales of motor vehicles are dropping. So I think we ought to consider this amendment very carefully.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Withem, please, then Senator Warner.

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Mr. President, members of the body, I was...I had turned my light on to call the question. But, after hearing the last two speakers, I really can't restrain myself. I'm going to have to speak in opposition to this amendment. The reason the last two speakers have agitated me a little bit is because last year I came in with a bill, straightforward, up front, saying let's raise the gas tax 1 cent and let's use that money to build and maintain city and county roads. I did not get support from the last two speakers on that up front measure to raise the gas tax. The bill did pass. We did get additional money into the cities and counties, a 1 cent gas tax last year. It was a tough, hard fight, but it was an up front fight. The reason I oppose this amendment is because it is a windfall, not a windfall in the sense that maybe the money is not needed, not a windfall in the fact that yes, Senator Abboud, 84th Street is in tough shape, 72nd Street is in tough shape, we need it fixed, but a windfall in the sense that the sales tax measure was not a