

SENATOR BEUTLER: Debate is ceased. Senator Johnson, would you like to close?

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Yes. We have a new light on that says, call the question. Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, it is my fate in life to have to close on a bill that I really don't support because I have always supported the general homestead exemption. On the other hand, I have watched us fail to fund the general homestead exemption and knowing that next year will be an even more difficult year for us financially than this year, I believe that we will not fund the homestead exemption next year. Accordingly, it seems to me that the proper and appropriate thing for us to do is to repeal the general homestead exemption. Before you cast your vote though I would like to make a couple of points because senators have talked to me a little bit about this. Number one, this bill does not touch the current homestead exemption for the elderly, nor does it touch the current homestead exemption for disabled veterans or for widows of veterans or widows of disabled veterans. So that existing homestead law will be left totally and absolutely alone. Senator Eret raised a couple of technical questions on the floor and during the course of the debate my staff took the time to visit with the Department of Revenue and with Senator Eret and answered the technical questions to his satisfaction. One of the questions he raised was the propriety of repealing a little disclosure statement on the homestead exemption form. The disclosure statement that is being repealed is the one that applies to the general homestead exemption. But there is a similar disclosure statement requirement for the other homestead exemptions and that is not being repealed. Senator DeCamp has talked at length about the issue of local taxation and property tax relief. He, of course, is totally correct that local government in Nebraska is the dominant form of government. State government is not the dominant form of government. Therefore, so many complaints by Nebraska taxpayers about their level of government taxation are complaints that really should be addressed to local government and not the state government. I suspect that over time we are beginning to learn in our own collective psyches that that is the case and, in fact, the best way for us to reduce reliance on local government is for the state over a period of time to begin to assume some of the responsibilities of local government so that we can directly