

more important than any other area at this time. The roads and actually the welfare programs in my survey were the two that was mentioned most often. So I certainly hope that we do address the road funding.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Pirsch.

SENATOR PIRSCH: I rise to support LB 2E. This refers to a sales tax, a sales tax which was originally established for the General Fund. Later it was earmarked for the highway trust fund and because of the necessity of continued monies for a continued project, that was allowed at that time. As Senator Johnson pointed out, however, the sales tax at that time was 2.5 percent which was a logical, reasonable amount allocated at that time. Every time we raise the sales tax, that was an increase in the highway trust fund as well and this is not really a decrease. This is a decrease in the increase. The Roads Department will still have more than they had before the last session when we passed the three increase in road funds. LB 112, LB 346, LB 208 all gave increases. I passed out a handout which shows the state gasoline tax rates for around the nation and when you look at some of the other taxes that are added to other states in addition to their gasoline taxes, Nebraska does not look as high as it does with just flat gasoline taxes. But we are high and we put a high priority and we've raised hundreds of millions of dollars for the Highway Trust Fund. Filling chuckholes are very visible to everyone, I realize, but I agree with Senator Vickers. The cuts we are going to have to make this session, this special session, next session and maybe even into the next in our education and our other services may not be as visible as filling a chuckhole or not filling a chuckhole, but those kinds of cuts will, nevertheless, be visible many years down the road if we do not take care of some of the other things that state government is dedicated to. And I really don't understand, for many years, as long as I've been here anyway, everyone has decried earmarking, earmarking that sets up funds that do not come under the perusal of the Legislature. We didn't establish the Children's Trust Fund last session because of that terrible earmarking. Even for children last session we could not establish a trust fund. Does that mean that children are not as important as our highway tax funds, our highway trust funds? I hope not. We are going to be facing many difficult cut decisions and, yes, we will be raising taxes also. I assume that that will happen, but these are