

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Thank you, Senator Schellpeper. I just wanted to respond briefly to some of the remarks that Senator Beutler made. First of all, the handout that was delivered to you doesn't represent any kind of a plan. I thought most of you would recognize that as the summary of the materials that were presented in the report prepared last year. The primary reason that was distributed to you was to indicate the economic impacts that can occur if the line is abandoned and also to refresh your memory about some of the expected costs that are associated with saving the line. The notion is that the study shows us that we can have a positive economic benefit to the State of Nebraska, if we make an investment in that line. Now one of the comments made was that somehow we were going to subsidize somebody \$11 million, based on the materials that were in front of you. I think any fair reading of that won't indicate that that's the case. First of all, the appropriation is only for \$5 million so how are we possibly going to subsidize anybody to the tune of \$11 million with this proposal? Simple arithmetic, it doesn't work out. If the appropriation, requested appropriation was for \$16 million, then we would have something to talk about. The appropriation is for five, how can it possibly represent a subsidy of eleven? That simply does not work out. And I was glad to have Senator Schellpeper raise the questions that he did, because I think...

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ...during the debate last year one of the questions posed was the necessity of having kind of a partnership between the folks who had an interest in this line and that would be the local communities, the State of Nebraska and the private interest, whether the shipper or the operator. And I think it's entirely appropriate that we have that kind of a partnership. It will increase the chances of success of this line and we are working to develop that kind of a partnership. Last year we put in place the tools for the State of Nebraska to participate. We have an operator who is willing to participate. This year or later on you will be asked to vote on the tools that will allow the locals to participate. The amendment that we're now asking you to consider is simply to give the state the funding that will be necessary for them to participate. And, in part, Senator Beutler raised a chicken and egg kind of a scenario. Which one do you do first? Do you get the money so you can evaluate a project? Or do you evaluate a project and then come back for...