

SENATOR WITHEM: Mr. President and members of the body, I stand to ask you to oppose this motion to revive LB 210. Senator Johnson made some excellent remarks, as he always does, about the general topic of property tax relief. I think it was unfortunate that his comments came up on a morning when we are kind of just getting back to work and there was not a lot of attention to what he had to say. I made some excellent remarks about what we need to do in this area. I am not going to repeat those. I am going to address this subject from a different angle and it is one where a lot of my constituents have been approaching me and that is the angle of faith in government, and you people down in the Legislature, when you do something, do you really mean it or are you just playing games? Since January 1, I have been told by my friends that work down in the county court house that there have been lines in the assessor's office of people coming down, applying for this general homestead exemption. They have been told by the Legislature that if you come down to the court house, fill out this form, the first \$3,000 of your property value will be exempt from taxation and this will mean to you not a huge tax break but it will mean to you roughly a \$75 reduction in the amount you pay in property taxes. And they tell me that the people that are signing up for this have one universal question and they say to the assessor's office, are we really going to get this? Is this for real? When the time comes for the money to be spent on this, is it really going to be spent? And the assessors, all they can say is, we certainly hope so. We were told by the Legislature that this program is going to go into effect and we certainly hope that the money is going to be there. The assessor's office down in Sarpy County has told me that they have had to hire additional people to help process this paper work. Now they are looking to the Legislature, they are saying to the Legislature, did you really mean this a year ago when you passed this homestead exemption or is this another one of those promises government holds out for us that they then when the time comes to pay for it, it isn't going to be there? I ask you for once let's stand behind what we said a year ago, let's keep this homestead exemption in place. Let's not revive LB 210. We made a promise to the people that we were going to provide some property tax relief a year ago. Let's stand behind that now and let's not revive LB 210. When the appropriate time comes to dig deeper into our pockets and, yes, maybe dig deeper into our tax rate,