

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Rod Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, Senator Schmit has brought up a point that has been discussed by at least some of the members of the past Ag Committee that I served on and former Senator Tom Vickers and I worked on some proposals to try and put some teeth behind the law by withholding county road funds from the counties if they didn't carry out the program. We were told that that was unworkable, possibly unconstitutional and eventually that all fell apart and that took place a year or so ago when we argued that particular aspect because it seemed that we were not getting anything done in this regard. I question whether the amendment is doing anything more than adding cost to the program and I would suggest if you want to add cost to the program, then just give the money to the Department of Ag. Why set up under this procedure in Senator Schmit's amendment a mechanism where I assume the Attorney General is going to have to hire folks to go out and investigate? They are going to have to go out and put pressure on these counties to carry out the programs and so you really haven't solved the financial problem. All you've done is add the money now back into the program and if you want to do that, do that through the appropriations process when those appropriation bills hit the floor. And you can either do it by putting the...by adopting this language and then trying to tack some additional money into the Attorney General's Office or possibly strike or kill this bill and attempt to get some money into the program when the appropriation bill hits the floor for the Department of Agriculture. Those are some options for you. But I don't see that the amendment, quite honestly, is going to alleviate the cost that Senator Hannibal was talking about or that many of you have come up to me and said, if we're going to eliminate cost, how is this program going to do it and I look at this amendment and I'm not sure that we're going to save anything in the end. Quite frankly, I think all you're going to do is add additional cost and tack that onto the Attorney General's Office. So, as I see it, it is sort of a shell game. We're just shifting the responsibility from one department to now the Attorney General's Office and maybe possibly someone else and, all in all, it is a very frustrating thing as I think this body is beginning to understand as we discuss this issue in more detail, that everyone has an idea of what we should or should not do, but it all revolves around whether we've got some funds. And right now we don't have a nickel and you've got to recognize that, there is not a nickel in the program. And until