

PRESIDENT: Okay, thank you. We will move on to LB 963, please.

CLERK: Mr. President, 963 was a bill that was introduced by Senators Schmit, Baack and Weising. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 7 of this year, Mr. President, at that time referred to the Agriculture Committee for public hearing. The bill was advanced to General File. I do have committee amendments by the Agriculture Committee. (See page 792 of the Legislative Journal.)

PRESIDENT: Senator Rod Johnson, are you going to handle the committee amendments, please?

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Yes, I am. Mr. President, members, LB 963 increases the wheat checkoff from its current 7 1/2 mills to 10 mills as amended by the committee. The original bill had a ratchet or stair-step approach providing that after a certain year the Wheat Board could increase their levy from 7 1/2 mills to 10 mills on July 1 of '88, up to 15 mills beginning July 1 of '89, and then to 20 mills beginning July 1st of 1990. Interpreting what mills mean is rather simple, and one of the things the committee felt we should do was change the terminology from mills to cents, so that it would be more clear, I guess, in the statutes for individuals to understand. What the committee amendments do would increase the checkoff from its current 3/4 of a cent to 1 cent per bushel on wheat. They struck...the committee amendments strike the portion dealing with the stair-stepping or ratcheting effect primarily because the committee felt that if the Wheat Board wanted to come to the Legislature and increase their fee at the appropriate time they could do so, and that the Legislature then would have some basic oversight. So that is part of the committee amendments. It strikes the provisions dealing with the ratcheting effect. It simply puts a cent, 1 cent per bushel, limit beginning I believe immediately. Also we put in...there was some concern expressed to the committee by certain farm organizations about accountability and making certain that there was a hearing prior to any increases in the fee once the fees were permitted to go up by the Legislature, so we have put some language into the bill adopting rules and regs for a hearing structure so that the concerned body or concerned individuals and bodies could come forward and express themselves before the Wheat Board before any changes were made in the levy. With that, that is a brief