

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I regard this moment as one of the high points of being a state senator. This is one of those kinds of moments that makes me grateful to have the opportunity to be here, and I'm sure that you are equally as grateful to be here, because this is one of those times when you and I are called on collectively to exercise the very best judgment that we can exercise. We are being asked, without the check of the Governor's office, without the veto potential of the Governor's office, to send to the people an amendment to the Nebraska Constitution which, if adopted by the people, will alter forever, or at least until a successor constitutional amendment, uniformity provisions in our Constitution which currently require one piece of property to carry values that correlate with another piece of property. I believe to the marrow of my bone that LR 249, if sent before the public and if approved by the public, will permit us to take action which our forebears would never have approved, and that action very simply is to allow one class of property to be treated substantially differently from another class of property, in this case the class of property is agricultural property. As Senator Warner has so capably pointed out, not only will we in the future be able to treat agricultural property differently from other property, but we can also treat within agricultural property one kind differently from another kind of property. I know in here that many of you are terribly anxious about surrendering the income method of valuing agricultural property. I can guarantee you, as I stand here, you do not need to surrender the income method of valuing agricultural property in the absence of this proposed constitutional amendment. Our Constitution currently allows an income valuation of agricultural property, it currently allows that, the results simply have to be correlatable to other results. What you lose in this amendment, what the public loses and what we lose in this amendment is we lose a uniform system of valuing and taxing all property, and we start once again down a path that can ultimately lead to property tax ruin. Now we, this summer and fall, will work in the Revenue Committee and in the Education Committee and in the Tax Study Committee on property taxes, school finance and equitable distribution of state aid. I am of the opinion that we ultimately will arrive at results that, if adopted by this Legislature and approved by the Governor, will relieve some rural property tax stress and obviate some of the kind of anxieties that you might feel inside to support LR 249. But I tell you if this issue gets on the