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FLOOR DEBATE

March 28, 2001 LB 668

you're recognized to open on LB 668.

SENATOR KREMER: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor and members of the body. LB 668 was...I'm carrying this for the Department of Health and Human Services. And it authorizes the department to establish a multimedia mitigation program, radon program. Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas. It is a breakdown of a product of uranium, which enters the home through the soil beneath our homes, and can be dissolved and accumulated in underground water which is used for drinking water. Breathing radon from the indoor air in a home is a primary public health risk from radon. Radon in our drinking water is much less of a hazard than it is in the air. And radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S., and contributes to about 20,000 cancer deaths each year in the U.S., according to a report from the National Academy of Sciences. These 20,000 lung cancer deaths, according to the academy, estimate that about 160 can be attributed to radon in the drinking water. So it's not nearly as prevalent in...from drinking water as it is just from the air. And then in order to reduce this public exposure to radon, the EPA is opposing...or, proposing two options for states to use of the public drinking system. The first alternative is to enforce the traditional maximum contaminant level approach under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The second is the application of an alternate MCL if the state adopts the unique multimedia mitigation program aimed at radon in the air. The state of Nebraska must select the option that it will use. Under the first option, an individual water system in Nebraska must reduce the radon levels in the drinking water to 300 picocuries per liter. This would affect approximately 50 percent of our 617 community water systems in the state. And it's estimated that the cost of a small treatment plant for a small community with less than 500 people would be about \$750,000, which could well cost the systems in Nebraska something greater than \$400 million to our small communities. The second option, which we're proposing here in LB 668, would authorize Nebraska to develop an enhanced state indoor air radon program, called the multimedia mitigation program. This would allow the alternate MCL for the community water systems to be set at 4,000 "piniscules" (sic) per liter, rather than the 300. No community water system in Nebraska currently exceeds this