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FLOOR DEBATE

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emissions. And I support the cooperation on that and on that ban. I think Senator Bromm's work with leaking underground storage tanks and the amendment that we have done with that to continue that fund is a good thing for the citizens of Nebraska and I believe for the environment and how we deal with those contaminated sites. And I appreciate the cooperation on the emissions fee portion. Where my concern comes from is with those hazardous emissions, we have a lot of mercury going into the air in Nebraska. Almost one-third of the mercury that we have for contamination comes from coal and the burning of those fossil fuels. We have warnings that we issue each year through DEQ on our water bodies having too much mercury in them, and that mercury getting into the fish and the aquatic life that then we have to warn people not to eat. It's important that, particularly, developing children, women, and women of childbearing age who also may be nursing or who may be pregnant, are particularly sensitive to that level of mercury. When on one hand we're issuing advisories, we need to on the other hand not continue to put that mercury into the environment in the first place. It poses every bit as great a danger as some of the other contaminants and pollutants that we put in our air, and thus end up in our water, so that the two are connected. I will continue to work with the utilities to try to encourage and push and cajole and whatever I can to get them to move into energy efficiencies and renewable energy. I do appreciate all that they have already done. I want to thank Governor Johanns for a letter that I just received from him today, in his efforts to work with me and continue the efforts that we started with the wind study that we did, and him working with the energy office to continue to look for additional opportunities for rural economic development, as we harness the wind capacity that we have in Nebraska. Nebraska has the sixth highest capacity for wind generation of any state in the union. Ladies and gentlemen, we are the Saudi Arabia of wind, and we're not harnessing that capacity. It's out there, it's free, we don't ship money out to the coal fields, we don't put the money out-of-state. That money stays in Nebraska, it gets recycled within Nebraska. It's a free resource that's available for the tapping. The cost is, at this point, very competitive, particularly when we factor in the health risks and the cost for mercury and the other contaminants coming out of the emissions