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FLOOR DEBATE

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plus from the LUST Fund. And based on last year's figures, \$10.6 million, 20 percent of that is going to be roughly \$2,100,000. So it would be a net gain to the bill of about \$1.2 million, based on a \$900,000 gluten tax figure. And that \$1.2 million would reduce our reliance on General Funds. And that's what I'm trying to do. I want to find a way to pass this bill. I think ethanol and support of ethanol by the Legislature and by the people in Nebraska is critical. I'm trying to find...I...I am scrapping and scraping for any money in our budget, any money that we can find to make this doable. And I know that for some people the gluten tax is a hurdle, for others the General Fund appropriation is a hurdle that's very difficult for them to make. And so that's why I've offered this amendment. Now let me get a little bit into the arguments as to why we should use the LUST Fund and what that's about. Essentially, if you go back in time here, this thing was introduced by Senator Loran Schmit. And the idea...this was 1989, the idea is to clean up leaking underground storage tanks. Those of us on the Natural Resources Committee are very familiar with it, other in the body may not be so much if you haven't spent time. But these leaking underground storage tanks, of course, are a threat to drinking water. And they do need to be cleaned up, and I'm not proposing here that we eliminate the fund by any stretch. It started out pretty small, it started out with one-tenth of a gallon...one-tenth of a cent per gallon on diesel, and three-tenths of a cent on gasoline, and that was in 1989 when the Legislature passed the bill. And then that has crept up. In 1992, the \$3 million generated by the original bill wasn't enough, Legislature increased the tax to 2 cents on diesel, six-tenths on gasoline, effectively doubled the fund, it was 6 million bucks a year that it was generating in 1992. By 1998, it was increased again to three-tenths on diesel, nine-tenths on gasoline, now generating the current figure of \$11 million a year. What that's done is over time, if you look at how much money we've spent here, total reimbursement since 1989, the LUST Fund has reimbursed the cost of cleanups for these leaking underground storage tanks to the tune of almost \$50 million. So the people of Nebraska have determined, we as their representatives have determined that it's important to clean up these leaking underground storage tanks. And again, I agree; I'm not proposing we stop that at all. So we've spent