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FLOOR DEBATE

March 6, 2002            LB 427, 1003

on AM2781 to the committee amendments.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Thank you, Mr. President. The amendment is the contents of LB 427, if you wanted to look in your bill books for the bill. The bill, that bill, was advanced...well, Senator Jones, you didn't vote for that. You were absent. All the other members of the Natural Resources Committee voted to advance that bill. It is a very simple issue, although I think it's...it's one with some considerable importance. The bill actually arose out of a major fire that we had in the...near Crawford two years ago. We had a very high fire danger in the area. We have a considerable amount of federal lands and it came to our attention that the local law enforcement officials, not the sheriffs, not the local conservation officers, no one was really available to enforce a federal order prohibiting persons from going on federal lands during those very high fire danger periods. We did have one federal officer in the area that could attempt to enforce their orders, but one federal officer was clearly not sufficient for the thousands of acres of federal land that we had in the area. Now, the bill simply authorizes local jurisdictions to enter into a memorandum of understanding or cooperation with the federal government to enforce those closure orders, so this isn't something that the locals are going to be required to do if they don't want to do, but we have other examples where they have entered into memorandums of understanding and do enforce state and federal law on federal lands. So it is permissive in nature and it would help, in the future perhaps, resolve an issue in...particularly in my part of the state where we have significant federal lands but oftentimes no...no real means to enforce what I would characterize as essential safety and fire hazard regulations; simply give us a tool in that regard.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. You've heard the opening on the Wickersham amendment. Open for discussion. Senator Smith. Senator Smith waived off. Senator Schrock, on the Wickersham amendment to the committee amendments.

SENATOR SCHROCK: We did discuss this amendment in...in committee and I concur with Senator Wickersham and I urge you to vote for the amendment.