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FLOOR DEBATE

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three, it provides forest health protection; it's responsible for minimizing the spread of established invasive species and lessening the damage caused by native insects and diseases. And, fourth, Rural Fire Prevention and Control Program, providing organizational assistance and cost-share funding for protective firefighting clothing and equipment. It also reconditions military vehicles for firefighting purposes. And so we did pare down the initial budget. It came in at \$592,000 both years. We pared the first year down to \$300,000. The second year I believe is \$592,000, for the reason being that they are going to be phasing in. But it still will be a cooperative effort between the University of Nebraska and Nebraska Forestry Service. It will be housed there and, frankly, there is lots of cooperation across the state with NRDs. I think there is some joint appointments and things like that across the state, so there is a lot of cooperation. But it is felt that the trees...trees are a vital part of Nebraska. Whether you're in the rural areas or the urban areas, Fire departments are critical to the whole state. And so that's the reason for this bill and the continuation of this vital program, as far as I'm concerned, in the state. And with that, I probably have talked about the amendment. Was there a committee...I can't remember, was there a committee amendment or was this the bill? I guess the bill was corrected that came in.

**SPEAKER BROMM:** There is no committee amendment, Senator Wehrbein.

**SENATOR WEHRBEIN:** So this is the bill and that's it. I guess we had it right the first time in this case.

**SPEAKER BROMM:** Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. You've heard the opening on LB 917. Senator Janssen.

**SENATOR JANSSEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature. This state doesn't realize what a gem we have with the rural fire protection districts in this state. They do more good than probably any other volunteer organization in the state. I don't know how many other states have volunteers. I'm sure they do, but whatever we can do, if we did not have the volunteer fire districts to rely on in this state, we would be