

February 15, 1979

LB 26

are talking about control and I think the question is very fundamental. Do we want the local Natural Resource Districts to implement the groundwater controls in the State of Nebraska or do we not? And if we do not, then let's take those controls away from the Natural Resource Districts and put it on the state level so that we can fund it and do it from a state level. But if indeed we do want the local Natural Resource District to implement the groundwater controls in the State of Nebraska, then we have to give them the tools to implement those controls with and we have to finance those controls and I think that is what we are doing in LB 26. Now there are many alternatives that have been considered by the Public Works Committee in its study of water for the last several years and certainly that study predates my coming to the Legislature by a good number of years. But in the last two years we have discussed water taxes, we have discussed water user fees, and while I philosophically like some of those things a little better than I like the expanded authority for the property tax, most people in the state don't agree with me and certainly most people in the Public Works Committee don't agree with me. And so we need this additional property tax in a control area and the Public Works Committee, after more than two years of just looking at this one question, has decided that it would rather go with the increased taxing authority on the property rather than a special tax just on water. That is the feeling of the Public Works Committee and I think that it is the way we should go now. Even though I support the other philosophy myself, I think this is what we should do now because I believe that the Natural Resource Districts should be those who handle the controls. Now when you look at it even closer, we have to look at the control areas that have been formed in the State of Nebraska and those that are likely to be formed, and when I look at my own Natural Resource District, I look at the Upper Niobrara-White Natural Resource District and that is the one I am familiar with and there it is four counties and there the only place where there is much irrigation and the only place where there is likely to be controls is in central Box Butte County, not a very large area, not an area with a lot of property valuation, and a quarter of a mill in that control area isn't going to generate enough money to do anything and so you are going to need that full mill to generate enough money to implement those controls. And so that is the alternative I think we have to go with. If we do not do that and it is necessary to implement groundwater controls in the Upper Niobrara-White Natural Resource District some day, what is going to happen, there are some alternatives, some things that may happen. Number one is they may make the