

March 31, 1980

LB 361

CLERK: Senator DeCamp now moves to amend the Schmit amendment by increasing the gas tax five cents.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator DeCamp.

SENATOR DE CAMP: Mr. President, for purposes of clarification, that is a total of a nickel. In other words, from ten to fifteen cents. Senator Schmit's was two and a half. This goes to a nickel. I know your first reaction, you say this is crazy. This is absurd. What the heck is going on. Two elements, I am dealing with energy and I am dealing with financing the roads and I think I want to give you a little bit of a history of how serious the problem is and what is likely to happen in the future but you have to go back and I have to give you some history in Washington. We built the interstates and we set up the highway trust funds and we starting building up billions of dollars in those funds on the theory that after the interstates had been in existence a while they would start to have wear and tear and pot holes and would need massive expenditures. I think I mentioned part of this before. Lyndon Johnson, when he was trying to finance Vietnam wars and great society programs saw the highway trust fund pot and he says we will take that money and spend it now and when it comes time to pay for the highways we will get the money then. We will worry about it then and they officially adopted a program called Deferred Maintenance. Nebraska was one of those quick to seize upon the concept and we also deferred maintenance and what you are driving on today throughout most of Nebraska is the result of something called Deferred Maintenance. Now we estimate, I think the figures I have seen is that every automobile in this state pays an additional hundred and some dollars, hundred and one or hundred and six dollars per year in repair costs and utility costs, or I mean fuel costs, strictly because of the condition of the roads in this state. We had an opportunity in this state in '70, '71, '72 to do something about it. Senator Warner, myself, as I recall, two or three of the other senators that are no longer here, tried to get the Governor at that time to issue road building bonds, construction bonds. We could have paid them back and built the roads at a fraction of the cost. Roads are made primarily of asphalt. Asphalt comes from something called oil and oil has gone up three and four and five hundred percent since this all started. On the other hand, the income to provide the construction of the roads and the maintenance of the roads is limited not to a percentage but as you know, to a fixed amount per gallon. We are encouraging decrease in gallonage use. Now Senator Keyes quoted some figures to show that really, the income has gone up. Well if you listen to those figures,