

SENATOR WIITALA: Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I urge your support of Senator Burrows farm legislation, LB 184, for a whole host of reasons. First of all I just want you to recall some history as it relates to this bill. The bill has a long history of about seven years of being presented before an agricultural committee. Senator Burrows has diligently listened to the criticism of his bill and incorporated constructive suggestions and criticisms into his language to the point where I think his bill has arrived at a time where it addresses a serious question, as a mature bill. I don't believe that LB 184 attacks corporations per se but one thing it does is favors proprietorship. It is not against corporations that remain in the hands of an agrarian proprietor or manager. But, when it steps over the traces and becomes an anatomist being, entering the state, usually outside our state boundaries it is an entirely different problem. If I could believe the large corporation purchasing farm lands, not as a proprietor but as an investor, hiring managers and asking farmers to be tenants rather than custodians of their own soil, I could be safe in saying that corporate farming was a good practice. I don't believe that the large corporate farms are interested in soil stewardship. They are interested in investments and profits but probably most of all in our present economic climate a chance for tax write offs, a chance to invest in real estate. This practice of continual concentration has damaging effects on the farming community. I mean it is bad enough that farmland is concentrating as it is. But, that is the law of economics but to accelerate it through this type of a process, drying up more and more communities, seeing our profits exported from the state, seeing people removed from the land, that is an entirely different story. I identify with this not only from the fact that I came from the agrarian past but also my experiences in the city. I bemoan the fact that the neighborhood community grocery store is gone. Not so much the store itself is gone but the community that surrounded it and supported it is gone. Now I would sure hate to see in the future the practice that the only way you could get accessibility to the farm lands of this fair state is by purchasing it through a franchise much like the quick shops that replaced the small neighborhood grocery store. Earlier in the session we voted in favor of LB 9, Senator Maresh's bill which excluded pension trusts from entering Nebraska and purchasing farm lands for investments. I think that LB 184 is consistent with that very same philosophy. I feel quite sincerely that it is no threat to the farmers of Nebraska. At least the kind of farming that has existed here well over a century involving single proprietorship and highlighting soil stewardship. With that, I would urge your support of LB 184. Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Sieck and then Senator Barrett.