

Jeffersonian democracy and Thomas Jefferson extolled the virtue of the small farmer. He extolled the virtue of that person who owned that parcel of ground and tried to eke out a modest living, the well informed citizen. But, the truth of the matter is again studies have demonstrated time and again that with investor ownership of land comes the basic destruction of the social network that has supported rural America. And, I quote from the same study, "Non local ownership of farmland also poses a threat to the rural community. As early as 1940 a study of Arizona rural communities showed that a small dairy farms were replaced with large cotton farms operated by hired managers. Agricultural employment became stratified, land ownership became concentrated, absentee ownership increased, land and water resources were exploited, soil fertility was exhausted, small rural communities died and local self-government became non-existent. Subsequent studies have verified these results conclusively. The United States Department of Agriculture in its testimony agreed that non-local ownership has lead to less local control of resources, less intensive land use, lower community involvement, loss of secondary income and increased ownership concentration. Touching on this last point, Professor Rice in his testimony explained that non-local investors tend to buy larger tracts of land than local farmers do. This concentration of ownership makes land unavailable and the parcel sizes needed by starting farmers or farmers looking to expand their acreages. Members of this body, I think this piece of legislation is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation to come before us. Because it really does have to do with what the future in this state will look like, not just for us, but for our children and our childrens children. I certainly encourage your support.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Koch.