

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you, and it will save time.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Proceed.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Members of the Legislature, I'm going to read the amendment. "Such 1 percent sales tax shall not be assessed against utilities, clothing or household goods of any kind or description." I feel an obligation, as a member of this Legislature, to speak on behalf of those people who are hurt the most by the sales tax. We have people in this body who have studied economics, we have those who have not studied economics, but they've been here long enough to understand the nature of the sales tax. It's a flat percentage on anything that you buy in disregard of what your income is. It is now, if you accept Senator Schmit's amendment, just from the state end of it 5 percent. Maybe somebody is going to go out and buy an old struggle buggy, or instead of being able to buy a Cadillac, Senator Smith, as the members of the Legislature can do, they'll have to buy a "Rattlac", and in order to do that they scrape together their little money, they go down to purchase it and now it's an additional one percentage cost in buying the thing. That can make a lot of difference when you don't have much money. When we consider the problems of the farmers we're told that a tax concession might be the difference between staying in business and going out, even though they get government subsidies. We have the tourist industry concerned about the...well not the industry but we have the motel-hotel people concerned about the attempt to use the tourist industry as a justification to raise the tax on rooms in order to give some money to the arts. And they're talking about how much that will hurt them. When it comes to groups like that that are organized, that have standing and money and recognition in this society, the Legislature will give them serious consideration. We, today, if we adopt Senator Schmit's amendment, will be taxing those who are least able to bear it. If there has been an upturn in the economy, it has not been felt or experienced by them. Homelessness is not diminishing. Unemployment for those groups that chronically are unemployed is not diminishing. The unavailability of medical care has not diminished. Those who were hungry last year will be hungry this year. The soup kitchens, the various agencies that try to help those who are hungry and homeless are asking for additional assistance because the problems they are addressing have not mitigated in any way. So here we are today making what I consider to be a political move to further burden those people who are least able to bear