

handouts to show you the types of things that are funded that can be used with this lodging tax. It also shows a number of the counties who currently levy that tax and the rate that they are at. I would show you the types of public facilities that would benefit through the introduction of this tax to a local county. Now there is this committee amendment that is a reduction from the original bill, which was 4 percent to 2, after that there is an amendment, that will follow, that limits the bill strictly to Douglas County. And I would like to talk to each of those just briefly, Mr. President. But, since we're dealing with the committee amendments, I will turn my light back on and try to touch on as much of it as possible prior to discussion or voting on the committee amendments. The issue is an important one, especially to Douglas County. I can't speak for the rest of the state but I know when you look at the handout that I gave you there are approximately a little over 30, 31 states...31 counties that currently levy a lodging tax and use it to promote the tourism aspect of their counties. As all of you know, tourism is the third largest industry in the State of Nebraska. A billion and a half, over a billion and a half dollars are spent each year in Nebraska on tourism. It is an aspect of Nebraska that we have just begun to cultivate. We have begun to see parts of the agricultural sector, or the rural areas of our state become real tourist attractions. They have begun to see the dollars that are there for their economy by capitalizing on the tourist industry. I see a number of folks who live in the cities, who want to get out of there, who want to go to our park systems, who want to visit tourist attractions that are not connected to the state park system, but who find that the rural areas offer these, and along with that goes the need for lodging that is provided in many of these 31 counties in or near some of these vacation sites. What happens with this money? The money in LB 262 will go into the County Visitors Improvement Fund. Many of these facilities are located in all counties throughout the state, but many of these facilities are in need of improvement. They have much over...I guess overdue repair needs that basically they cannot have...they cannot meet themselves, they cannot meet through admission fees and...

PRESIDENT: One minute.

SENATOR HALL: ...and they don't have the resources at hand to provide for those. What LB 262 does is set up a fund, through an increase in the lodging tax, at 2 percent, as the committee amendments would provide, that allows for a funding mechanism