

Dr. Klutman. Thank you, we're pleased to have you with us today. Also in the north balcony, from Senator Rod Johnson's district, we have 48 sixth graders from Central City, the junior police, with their leader. Would you people please stand and be recognized by the Legislature. Thank you, we're glad to have you with us. Senator Ashford, on the Conway amendment, followed by Senator Crosby.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I stand in support of the Conway amendment for a couple of reasons. It appears, in talking to senators not from the Douglas County area that there is not a great deal of support to increase lodging tax in their counties or their districts and that is their prerogative. Even though there is an option provision in the bill, I can understand their concerns and acknowledge them. However, we, in Douglas County, feel that we have created, primarily through private donations, some significant attractions in the Omaha area that are not only attractions for Douglas County and for Omaha but are also attractions for persons from greater Nebraska and also individuals who travel through the State of Nebraska and have the opportunity to stop in Omaha and Douglas County and visit those attractions. We've gone over those in prior debate, and I won't go over them again. I am one senator in Douglas County that believes in the private-public partnership. We have seen a tremendous amount of contributions from private citizens and corporations in the last...especially in the last couple of years to enhance some of the attractions in Omaha that or many years had been left to deteriorate. And we're seeing an incredible expansion at the Omaha zoo which will, by all accounts, be probably one of the premier zoos, if not the premier zoo in the United States. This is a tremendous asset to the people of the State of Nebraska. Certainly I, as a Douglas County senator, want to see or at least have the people of Douglas County given an opportunity to vote to further enhance these attractions and projects. The key to it, in my mind, is this private-public partnership. The private-public partnership only works, in my opinion, if both the private and the public sectors are properly motivated. In this area of recreation and with the zoo and the museums and in the educational area, the public-private partnership in Douglas County is starting to work. As 775 has enhanced corporate involvement and corporate expansion in Omaha and Douglas County, those corporations have become more, as we predicted they would two years ago, have become more and more involved in some of the civic things that are important to the growth of Douglas County