

and thereby important to tax revenues, important to the State of Nebraska as a whole. I understand the reluctance of senators outside of the Omaha metropolitan area. Possibly, they would like to go slower or not move at all on this kind of measure. But please let us in Douglas County have the opportunity to continue to enhance those attractions which are so important to us and so important to the state. I understand some concern about travelers coming from greater Nebraska and coming to Omaha and paying that additional tax. I understand that and I can see their argument, but I think that, in return, what the citizens of the State of Nebraska are getting is a progressive metropolitan area that is becoming more and more involved in not only business development, but development of other areas which enhance...

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR ASHFORD: ...our quality of life. So even though there would be a small increase in the...if the voters of Douglas County approve such an increase, a small increase in the lodging tax, I believe, and I think the citizens of Nebraska will see that they will all benefit because of this public-private, private-public partnership which I so strongly believe in and which I believe is the future of our state anyway. This is one step. This is one piece in that partnership, and I strongly urge the passage of the bill and I support the Conway amendment because it appears as if that is the only way that this bill might move at this point. I certainly would encourage you to vote for it and then to vote for the bill in that shape and form. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Further discussion on the amendment, Senator Hall, followed by Senators Schmit, Dierks and Smith. Senator Hall.

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Mr. President and members. Again, let me remind you, and I...this is an amendment that is not, I guess, one that I have to date strongly opposed, but it is one that I'll let the body take its own temperature on this. It is clearly spelled out in 262 that it is a local option. There is clearly a mechanism that allows for the local county governing board to determine whether or not this tax should be imposed, and that is only after there is a public hearing on the issue. If you adopt the Conway amendment, you leave that only to take place within Douglas County, which is fine, because I guess the