

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. President, members, I stand and rise to support the advancement of this bill. As some of you might note, my name is on this bill and I've had more than my share of colleagues come up to me and ask me why I would choose to sign a bill that has very little impact upon my district and its citizens that live there, but I think it goes to the heart of the message that Senator Landis was giving to us in his closing on the committee amendments in that as state senators we're asked sometimes to provide for the good of all Nebraska and not just the parochial interest of the districts that we represent. This issue brings to mind a couple of situations that I think swayed my judgment on this issue. Back in 1985, in fact, on May 31 of 1985, I received a message then from former Governor Bob Kerrey to come to his office immediately, he needed to visit with me. I went back into his office and he sat down with me and he said, Rod, he says, I have some bad news to tell you. He said we have decided, based upon some reports from the Banking Department that we need to close the Fairfield and Edgar banks as well as the Oak and Taylor banks, and Fairfield and Edgar happen to be communities in my district. And I can remember the shock and the dismay that I had with that decision. And I remember meeting with those depositors and those borrowers of those institutions and the frustration and the anger and the fear that they felt, the loss of potentially their deposits and, of course, the borrowers, many of which were farmers, where they might go to find an institution that would take on their line of credit. And I guess since that date I've always had somewhat of a soft spot for this issue since that time because I can relate that the frustration that those folks might have felt in my district are the same kind of feelings I think many of the depositors of Commonwealth and State Securities and others who suffered under this collapse have to feel. And another issue came to mind that swayed my opinion that this is at least a moral issue as well as possibly a legal one. And in that...in the summer I believe it was, of 1986 or '87, the Harvard State Airfield had a natural catastrophe, a couple of the hangars in those areas were burned down and many of the local fire departments were called to help fight the fire on the state airfield. Legally, the state had no obligation to pay those volunteer fire departments that suffered damage to their equipment. In fact, they did offer a claim before the state and the attorney from the state argued that there was no legal basis in which we were to pay them. The State Claims Board and this Legislature chose then not to agree with that attorney and went ahead and paid those claims at a reduced level, but nonetheless