

towards this amendment, but I'd like to discuss it at this time if you could, please.

PRESIDENT: Senator Rod Johnson, please, followed by Senator Warner.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. President and members, I rise to support Senator Schmit's efforts in this regard. I think that the probability of getting some action on this amendment probably is, favorable action I should say, probably is remote, but nonetheless, I think that we have to take a look at the situation that now exists in Nebraska. Not being a member of this body during the seventies and early eighties, it appeared to me as I looked at the Legislature at that time, that most of the focus when we talked about water issues centered on water quality, or quantity issues, trying to develop answers to the water problems we had in the state with the depleting aquifer and building more water retention projects in the state and addressing the problems that we might have through drought years. Starting about 1985, if I remember, which would have been my first year as Chairman of the Ag and Environment Committee, the Legislature, I think, began to take a different look at water issues and began to talk more about water quality issues and we've been focusing, I think, an awful lot of attention in that regard with the passage of the chemigation law, special protection agents, or areas and variety of other legislative bills that have been considered by this Legislature. I think the attention of this body has been more focused on water quality in the last four or five years. But because of the drought a year ago, the impending drought that we may be faced with this year, the questions of what's going to happen to the aquifer of the state and what is going to happen in particular areas where that aquifer is dropping with the use of irrigation, it is important I think that the state begin to assess whether or not we have the adequate reserves when I speak about water retention projects to help replenish that aquifer, and to meet the needs that we're going to have throughout the next few years to raise crops in this state and to meet the demand that irrigation is placing upon the aquifer. It was interesting yesterday, I received a phone call from a reporter from the World-Herald who was basically asking me this very question that we're debating right now, it's, why has the state sort of ignored this area? I don't think we've ignored it per se, but we have not focused our attention on it and maybe with the drought years that we...well, at least the one drought