

thing about Commonwealth. People were calling wanting to know what we wanted to do and I kind of had to turn and smile and look at Senator Johnson and say, okay, another question, take it. And as I have looked at this over the six years that this issue has been out there, I am convinced that we have an obligation as a state to do this no matter how unpopular it might be in the west. I think the very integrity of our government rests on decisions like this. Personally, had I been the governor, this would have been in my budget. I feel that strongly about it. There should be room to do this and I recognize that this is going to be in there competing with other funds that some of us might prefer to spend elsewhere. But this is the only way this issue is going to get resolved, is if we do it, and I think the Legislature has what it takes to do it. I think, as I talk to people in my district and around, that people really don't have any confidence in government any more and we have got to do some of these things to restore that confidence in government. And to duck this issue or to vote no, I think further erodes people's belief in government, it further enhances their cynicism in government and it does a great injustice to the people that are standing out here behind this glass. It's not a Lincoln issue, it's a statewide issue. And I hope that I never stand before you and say I have constituents in distress that the state has wronged and I need money, but if I ever do, I hope you will be there and I hope the state will be there. And so I feel an obligation to do this even though it's a really difficult vote for a western senator. But I do recall when we first addressed this issue that Senator Baack and Senator Nichol and I stood on the floor together and helped get it as far as it went, I think, because we all believed it was the right thing to do. So most of these people are grandparents, standing out here that I have talked to, and a lot of them don't have any money and I know people continue to say, even one of my editors recently said, we don't have any obligation to those folks, but I think we do, and I think the confidence in our government rests on making these kinds of difficult votes. I would like to speak briefly on the rule suspension issue because this concerns me. I don't want this to be perceived as a precedent, and, as a member sitting on the Appropriations Committee, don't come to me next week and say, well, you suspended the rules for Commonwealth. If it's an issue that's been outstanding for six years, I will listen to you, but if it's something that happened last week, don't bring it to us. This is not a precedent that should be repeated but it should be done. Thank you.