

by Senator Elmer.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Well, Mr. President and members, I agree that the discussion thus far has been more broad than just on the amendments, but I believe and I agree with Senator Rod Johnson that it's important that we discuss this issue. So often on this floor we get wrapped up in the subject of revenue and appropriations that we forget some of the other more basic requirements that are important to the State of Nebraska. Senator Rod Johnson and myself and most of the others, members of both the Natural Resources Committee and the Ag Committee, have a deep personal interest in the soil and water of this state and we have an ongoing commitment to maintain the integrity of that system. And I want to say that I agree with Senator Rod Johnson, that I believe 1099 is a preferable vehicle to do that. We have also, over the years, and I want to commend Senator Johnson because when he was chairman of the Ag Committee in the early days, his early tenure, we enacted a bill there that was a very good bill in reference to the protection of groundwater. I think we need to continue that. The State of Nebraska has taken leadership roles in protection of groundwater. I think we can do that without this bill. Senator Schellpeper says Nebraska should control its own destiny. Senator Schellpeper, I suggest that we are not going to control our own destiny by the passage of 161, far from it. We have no control over our destiny at all by simply rubber-stamping the federal mandate. What I'd like to do is call it a federal... a state accountability for the federal program. Let's let the feds tell us why with such a good program that they proposed it would cost two-thirds of a million dollars annually to administer and they are handling it with four or five people, if that many. I would suggest that when, if and when you pass the bill, that price tag will escalate dramatically because they will then find a whole multitude of new requirements for the states to meet. I want to come back again to what I said earlier in reference to my blase acceptance of the mandate for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste and I...it's an embarrassment to me to tell you that I did not do my homework thoroughly, but I did not. And I don't think that I was alone in that, but I'm not going to indict anyone else. I was probably the only member of the body who did not do his homework as thoroughly as he should have. But we were told that it all had to be in place by X number of days, by certain dates and that there would be 14 sites. We had to join a compact. Ladies and gentlemen, I find out now that there will be less than