

SENATOR HALL: That's correct.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Chairman Hall.

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Mr. President, and members, the amendment that I offer is the one that I stated earlier would strike the penalty provision in LB 2. Prior to the introduction of LB 2, there was no penalty for filing your taxes late. The only thing you had to do was pay 15 per...or excuse me, 14 percent interest on what you owed and that, for a number of years, till the introduction of this bill, was felt to be an adequate control on late payments. With the introduction of LB 2, the change that would be made was a 50 percent penalty of the total tax owed. What the committee amendments would do would change that to 20 percent. My amendment would strike the provision altogether. It would just strike any penalty at all, outside of the 14 percent that you would have to pay in interest, and leave the situation as it currently exists. I do not think that it is fair that these individuals be required to pay anything more than the interest that is owed on the tax bill. What we're doing here is we will be doing exactly what Senator Schmit alluded to and that is we'll be putting a number of individuals who currently, for whatever reason, and most of them because they can't afford it, most of them because they can't afford it, pay their tax late. And it doesn't matter if your tax is late one day, one hour, one month or one year, the penalty is the same. I have not heard from any of the assessors that this is a problem. What this is, I think, is a boogey man that is out there that's been presented so that individuals will file their taxes, so that folks...you know, the argument has been made that many, many individuals are not going to file their taxes because of the Enron decision. Many, many folks are going to just forget that they have to pay, say we don't have to pay our personal property taxes. Ladies and gentlemen, that is not true. Those individuals who are familiar with the situation before us are individuals who have paid their personal property taxes. They have gone the route of the court system because they can afford to, they have attorneys either in house or on retainer and they have worked the system. The people that will be affected by this penalty provision are the folks who don't have a clue as to what we're doing down here this week, or don't care, or don't pay their property taxes on time because they forgot or the milk check didn't come in yet, or they didn't sell that herd of cattle yet and they don't have the money to do it.