

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Johnson. We'll now proceed to Senator Wehrbein.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, Mr. Chairman and members, I'd like to ask some questions. I don't know whether it should be Senator Johnson or Senator Moore. Questions would be, can the NRD do this job better or...as well or better than the groundwater districts are doing in the future? Why should we change now? How long have the groundwater districts across the state been out of business? Have there ever been others that have gone out of business before this? In other words, are these the five surviving or are these the original groundwater districts? Have others gone out of business and can the NRD's do it more efficiently as time goes along? You said the \$90,000 budget, it looks like to me sooner or later this has to happen. Is there a reason that we are going to go beyond the 15 years or thereabouts that we've had, 19 years, '71, was that the NRD?

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE: Well, as far as your question about what has happened in the past as far as other groundwater conservation districts went away prior to this, maybe...I can't answer that question, Senator Wehrbein, but I will answer the second part of your question. Senator Schmit or Senator Warner, their institutional knowledge may have a better handle on that than I do, but as far as the NRD being able to do it, the answer to could they do it, yes. Could they do it better? I don't know. Could they do it more efficient, more efficiently? Probably not. Could they spend more money? Most certainly. This group, this organization, you have five counties that hires one man that covers...you know, I don't have the facts in front of me as far as how many acres they deal with. All I can tell you from my perspective, if an organization is getting a lot of bank for my buck, I don't want to criticize the NRD's and say they couldn't do it that cheaply, I don't know. They certainly may possibly be able to, but I do know this, that there are very few governmental agencies in any site that have impressed upon me their ability to squeeze every last drop of service out of the dollar we're giving to them. When you have a five-county area, you're doing runoff control, you're doing groundwater conservation scheduling, you're doing monitoring, you're doing depth charge, doing nitrate testing, you're doing all that for a very little fee. If the NRD would do it, I don't know how much