

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Madam President, members, LB 21 was brought to the Natural Resources Committee by Senator Coordsen and due to a problem that has arisen in his district. Senator Coordsen, his county has one of the first SPAs or special protection areas. Those areas are designated by the natural resource districts when a groundwater contamination problem exists and steps are to be taken then to cause remedial action to be...to clean up the groundwater. The problem here is that when an SPA is implemented, it also has the ability to assess two cents on \$100 worth of valuation only within the boundaries of that SPA. And, unfortunately, what we have found, at least in this particular case, that does not generate all that much money. What is also complicating this situation is within that SPA you have some municipal wells that furnish water to the City of Beatrice where the City of Beatrice is benefiting from the SPA being implemented there but it will basically not pay anything into the SPA since it is outside of the city limits and is not within the SPA that has been designated. So it caused a complicating situation and I guess Senator Coordsen and I and Senator Baack and Ron Fleecs, who is the Director of the Lower Big Blue NRD, sat down a couple of weeks ago and began discussing how we could handle this problem. What LB 21 does is basically eliminate the two cents on the valuation, \$100 of valuation that we have given to the NRDs for these special protection areas. What the committee amendment will do is strike the two cents and give the NRD the ability to levy an additional half cent on \$100 of valuation throughout the entire district, not just within the small SPA area, but on all the property within that natural resource district boundary, spreading out, thus, the cost in generating substantially more money. We realize that that may cause some concerns but there are two complicating factors here. One is that the Lower Big Blue NRD is near its mill levy lid and cannot just simply assume the cost within their existing 4.5 cents and, secondly, as I said, even if we designated an SPA, the dollars generated from the two-cent tax that we give the NRDs does not generate very much money, if at all, to actually carry out remediation of the contamination. So this spreads out the cost, basically gives a special half cent that would be implemented and set aside for the NRDs to deal with the SPA problems they might have within their boundaries or their districts. That's what the amendment does. I'd be happy to answer any questions. As I said, we have done some negotiating or at least talking between the parties here and there is some concern about having a small segment of landowners basically paying for the cleanup when, in fact,