

want to talk about it? If, in fact, you have a thousand small operators out there, and they are willing and able to pay \$5,000 and stay in business, and we clean the process up, does that justify that other expenditure of \$20,000 per operator from the fund or not? I do not know. On the other hand, if the operator does not have \$25,000, cannot get it, and is forced to close, then who bears the burden of the cleanup or do we just ignore it. Do we walk away whistling and say, well, I guess maybe it wasn't quite so bad? And since Old Ironsides can't pay his 25 grand, we will just not worry about this one. That is what is happening now, ladies and gentlemen. That is what is happening now. You can't get blood out of a turnip, and so if the small operator doesn't have the 25 grand, you are not going to get it out of him or her or anybody else, so what do you do? The fire marshal will find somebody else to go harass. Well, I don't really mean harass them, but go bother them. The EPA goes and finds somebody else and DEC goes to find somebody else. But I will tell you who gets around this system, ladies and gentlemen, once again, the seven and eight figure individual operator who has got the full-time attorneys and the full-time accountants and can work the numbers. Now, we have usually considered ability to pay as some sort of a criteria when we enact legislation. This is a tax, Senator Johnson is right. It is a tax, and it is a unique tax. We are putting the tax, basically, upon the consumer to pay for the cleanup. Didn't like the idea when it was brought to me, don't really like it now. But what I don't want to do is to use a mechanism of law enacted by this Legislature to put out of business thousands of small stations across the State of Nebraska, and, thereby, enhance the business of the large institutions, who will then turn around and charge me an extra nickel or dime to haul fuel out to the farm. That is going to happen. That is going to happen. I would prefer to pay a little more into the fund to keep those small stations operating in those rural communities, rather than to have to pay for it day after day after day for time immemorial because those stations are no longer there. Drive through any first class city or smaller in the State of Nebraska today and you can identify hundreds of locations where stations used to be located that are not there today. If the bill passes in the present form, ladies and gentlemen, we will enhance and accelerate the demise of those stations. I do not believe it is inconsistent with policy for the State of Nebraska to say that it is good policy to try to keep some of those institutions viable. Senator Johnson said maybe there is a middle ground. I don't know. Obviously, 10,000 is better than