

I consider the Sinclair station downtown a small operator, and I consider the mini-mart on the highway a small operator, but the mini-mart right up the street is a chain. I don't consider them a small operator. Yet they all pump the same amount of fuel, all of them, over what this exemption would address. I truly would be comfortable, if I could see a tiered system that I could become comfortable with, I would really support it because I do have concerns that we are helping the very large distributors that Senator Schmit referred to when they don't really need the help. And I don't know if this boils down to a property tax like issue that whenever you do something fair, it seems to be unconstitutional. I'm not sure if that happens here or not. I just know that I have the same concerns as Senator Schmit, but this particular amendment is not one that I am comfortable with, and I will vote against it. Thank you.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Morrissey. Any further discussion on the amendment? Senator Schmit, do you wish to close on your amendment?

SENATOR SCHMIT: Well, Mr. President and members, it is extremely unfortunate that on this sort of a lazy afternoon in the spring, at two twenty-seven on April 15th or 16th, that we have such a small group of people here. It isn't going to do any good, ladies and gentlemen, a week from now, or a month from now, or six months now, if your constituent comes up to you and says, my gosh, we had to close the XYZ station because the guy couldn't raise the 25,000. If that happens, ladies and gentlemen, it happens. But the facts are that I really don't think the entire program is fair. I don't really believe that the consumer ought to pay for cleanup, but we bought that philosophy. We bought it because somebody sold it to us and we took it. Well, then the question is next, do you penalize every single operator the same amount of money? As I said, we tried earlier to have a staged sort of a phase in. We decided that wouldn't work. Senator Morrissey points out there are four stations that pump 500,000 gallons and they would not be affected. I don't know how many would be affected but I have been told quite a few. I think that Senator Morrissey will tell you that 500,000 gallons annually is not a large amount of fuel, particularly if you provide all of the other services that go along with it. Now if it is an addition to the convenience store, that may be something different again. But we do not have those kind of facilities in many of our communities, and I am deeply disturbed, as I look to my left and to my right, the