

raise about the creation of the fund is, does that obligate the DEC to respond to NRDs that might be doing water testing currently, whether we'd have to pay for that. It's not our intent to do that, Senator. We're simply establishing a fund that at some point, if we choose to fund it, through your appropriations process or through a new bill next year, for example, where we identify a funding source, then we can start moving that money into the fund. But it's not my intent to obligate the state at this particular point to any unnecessary expenditures.

SENATOR MOORE: But there is...is there...could the argument be made, then, that the state, as a policy, should wait until we decide how to pay for it before we pass this bill?

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: That argument can be raised, yes.

SENATOR MOORE: I mean, I guess I'm of the opinion I agree with Senator Johnson on the issue of groundwater quality. It's something that we all know is important to the State of Nebraska and we all must move forward on. I appreciate Senator Johnson's sensitivity to...I think the bill is drafted correctly, but the one thing it lacks is a funding source. And we all know why and I agree with Senator Johnson, I'm not wild about putting one in there. On the other hand, I think the body needs to look at, should you pass a bill like this, knowing that you have to make a choice. And the choice is one, creating a fee that will fund the cash fund, or two, recognizing this is in the best state's interest to do this and coughing up the necessary General Funds to make it work. And so I just want to make the body aware of is that the bill as it is doesn't...it only allows us to do something either on the General Fund side or on raising the fee structure, which some would call taxes, on the other side. At least everybody knows exactly what it is they're doing.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Moore. Senator Wehrbein.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Madam President and members. I'd like to ask Senator Johnson a couple questions if he would, please.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: How does this relate to the request from municipalities and maybe private enterprise...how would this relate to their request for funding for lab testing water