

attorney's have talked about that. It is very likely, though, that dealing with the kinds of companies that they would be up against, that it could be drug out for a number of years, and frankly, their resources are limited. They are talking about very shallow pockets, as opposed to very deep pockets. And they prefer not to go that route, because they understand that this is a...many of these gas companies are multistate, regional companies that could very likely delay an antitrust suit for anywhere from five to ten years if they chose to.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Senator Hall. I...my concern...I guess I have a small clothing store, and I know that I don't get the same deals that maybe Dillard's does or Younkers does when they buy in large quantities. And I...that's obviously not the same situation, but I don't know how I'm going to vote on the bill, but I'm going to...maybe if you have...if you have anything to add to that, Senator Hall.

SENATOR HALL: I do, Senator Ashford, and I appreciate the opportunity on your time. The...the issue here is that...what happens is the gas companies...

SPEAKER BAACK PRESIDING

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR HALL: ...have these individuals as customers. They're piping gas into my house. I don't have any choice. Once they've got that area, that region, I don't have any choice. I can't run another pipeline to the competitor just singularly to my house. So they've got me on line, they've got me hooked. I'm paying them for the gas. They then come in the sell me a service contract to take care of all my appliances for \$40 a year. After that, they sell me and service my appliances. The guy down the street, Joe's A&C, can't compete with the \$40 service contract. It costs him that much to come out probably the first or the second time, let alone all year. They can't buy in bulk the same way that the company does...the gas company. And what happens is, is that they take the service contract and use that as an ability...because they've got those monies coming in...granted a small company can get into the service contract business, and many of them have. That's the one way that they've started to compete, and I, frankly had very candid discussion...