

SPEAKER BAACK: Time.

SENATOR SCHMIT: In some instances it does not. Thank you.

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Schmit, yours is the next light on if you do wish to continue. Yours was the next. You just finished up on Rod Johnson's time, yours is the next light on.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Thank you, Senator, I will continue then. I think it's important that the members of this body recognize that this amendment is much more important than what it would appear to be. As you read the amendment it does not appear to be that earth shaking, but when you realize its impact and if you view it in the total context of water law in Nebraska, it is a major, major change. It has been 15 years or more ago that I introduced a bill in this Legislature which stated that no municipality could utilize underground water if surface water were available to it. Needless to say, every municipality up and down the river came in and opposed my bill. Now in the most recent years, because of the dramatic increase in the water needs of Lincoln and Omaha, some of the communities out west have come to me and said, Loran, perhaps we were wrong to have opposed your bill because it appears to us that perhaps Omaha and even Lincoln could go to the Missouri River for surface water rather than to deplete the aquifers of the Platte River, and so they are concerned now that if, in fact, there comes a contest for water reserves of the Platte River basin, so to speak, that a court may suggest to Lexington, Grand Island, Kearney, Columbus, go north or go some other direction and tap the Sandhills aquifers even though it may cost a considerably greater amount of money than to use the Platte River aquifers because Omaha and Lincoln may have preempted those water supplies. I think it is important that we look at any change in water law, not as to how it impacts upon us today or tomorrow or next year or five years from now, but how it's going to impact upon us 25, 50 and 100 years from now. So these changes which we are making are very significant. They could be extremely detrimental to agriculture and of course once again we find the same problems facing agriculture that we have in every other area. We do not have the resources, we do not have the organized combined resources to oppose a metropolitan class city such as Omaha if they decide to challenge us for those water rights. We find the same thing that is true on other legislation, but water is basic to agriculture and once that