

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President and members. I rise in opposition to the motion to bracket, which is essentially a motion to kill since holding the bill over to next year would eliminate it from consideration and would need to be reintroduced. LB 306 was a bill introduced last year, 306, one of the first bills introduced last session. It was advanced out of committee as, if you look in the bill book, on a 6 to 0 vote. Only one person, Senator Johnson, didn't vote. Senator Schmit wasn't there. It's been out on the floor now for, oh, about a year I guess, pretty close to it, and was the subject of an interim study that the Natural Resources Committee held last interim and I guess I understand there weren't very many testifiers on the bill. Now all of a sudden, after the bill gets advanced off General File, is picked as a priority bill, it's moving along a little bit, everybody gets up in arms about it. Well, it's nothing new and it's nothing that hasn't been the subject of an interim study. It's been around a year. All of a sudden editorials are written about us trying to ram something down somebody's throat. Well, I'll tell you, the feeling is a little different from this end of the view. We use about 2 percent of the water that's consumed in this state through municipalities, and that goes not only for the water we drink and utilize otherwise but we have it in our manufacturing activity, an important base of our economy as well as agriculture. Ninety-eight percent, thus, is utilized primarily by agriculture. We're asking for that little 2 percent to have some sense of priority in the system that we have for water. Trying to recognize the interrelationship between the surface and groundwater has been something that Senator Beutler and I, I remember back in '78 when we first got elected and went on to the Public Works Committee, we've been talking about that a long time, it's not a new concept and it's something I can't...I think can't be denied. It's clear to anybody who's familiar with the water issue at all. And so this is not something radical or unusual or being rammed down anybody's throat. It's, in fact, a simple sense of fairness that we're trying to ask for here, representing those people who live in our municipalities and make up the bulk of the population but utilize a fraction, a 2 percent fraction of the water that we utilize making sure that that water supply is protected into the future. I don't think it's too much to ask. I don't think it's too much to ask that we have that done this year. The study was conducted and maybe it wasn't on the exact version of the bill that we have before us, but Senator Beutler's been working long and hard on it. Most interests have been satisfied. I don't think anybody's