

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Kristensen. Senator Hefner.

SENATOR HEFNER: Madam President and members of the body, to me this is a sad day for Nebraskans when we take money out of the Highway Trust Fund and use it for some other purposes. I just think it's poor policy. And I do have a question for Senator Rasmussen, if she'll yield.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Rasmussen.

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: I'm sorry, what was the question?

SENATOR HEFNER: Senator Rasmussen, in your closing on the bill you mentioned that the teachers need more pay.

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: Um-huh.

SENATOR HEFNER: Have you ever considered increasing the sales and income tax to do this, instead of taking it out of the Highway Trust Fund?

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: Quite honestly, I'm...I'm...I'm looking for the same kinds of things that are there for the...for the Highway Fund for education and for teachers, stability, the ability to do long-range planning, to know the money is going to be there. And I am open to those other means of doing it. I sort of felt like we've been boxed into a corner, and so I'm looking for other ways to do it.

SENATOR HEFNER: Maybe we should earmark some sales and income tax for this, and then we wouldn't have to raid the Highway Trust Fund. Now you're...you're not situated as bad as I am. You're in Omaha, and I'm sure that we're going to finish the interstate system. But us in the rural areas, it seems like we have a little less clout, and a lot more money will go into the heavily traveled areas. And maybe this is as it should be. But I want to tell this body that many of the small towns have lost our railroads, and so the only way we can get commodities in and out of this community is by using the highways and the roads. So, we need a good road system. And I don't know how much more we'd increase the gas tax, but it seems like every time we increase the gas tax we lose a few more gallons, we get more border bleeding, because here we have Missouri to the southeast of us here that only has an 11 cent, 11 cent per gallon gas tax, whereas Nebraska has around 23 and maybe it's 24 now. So, I