

you are next.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, members, for those that are paying attention to this issue, I guess I would wish to make four important points that I hope that you will all seriously consider, especially many of you who are waffling on this issue one way or the other and are not sure how you feel about the issue of community consent through a vote. And the first question is, was there an actual public political vote promised? And the memorandum that I've sent to you, it is on your desk, explains the procedure that was followed by the Orr administration through Mr. Thorson, how this Legislature in 1988 rejected the concept of the vote, and established a criteria which determines to every extent possible, consistent with the highest level of protection for the health and safety of its citizens in the state, the protection of the environment, the developer should make every effort to locate this facility where community consent is evident, using environmental standards, as I understand it by that language, to determine community consent in itself. Secondly, I would ask you to take a look at the issue of cost. Those are not hypothetical costs, those are not pie-in-the-sky costs that this state is going to incur. As I understand it, the process that has worked so far in the siting is up to about \$30 million. That money is not necessarily all going to the US Ecology, which is the project designer. In fact, most of that or a good share of that money has actually gone to the Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Control to do the licensing review. So to point the finger at US Ecology as the one that is in fact eating up all this money is, in fact, not true. It is a breakdown between the two entities. In fact, I would say the fair share of that is going to our own state agencies, and the cost of withdrawing from the compact, the cost of not moving forward, or in this case of LB 72 of injecting a new standard I think could run the risk of substantial penalties and litigation to recoup the costs that have already been spent by our state and others, by the generators in those states, and the potential of having to do a number of things we may not want to do. Third, I would say, what are the alternatives? At this point in time, and I have met with Governor Nelson and others to discuss alternatives, to discuss potentially joining other compacts. Most recently we talked about joining with Texas, but Texas has set a standard right now that we can't meet in order to join up with them. It is very difficult at this time to stand here and say there is an alternative. If the alternative in your mind is on site