

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Ashford.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate Senator Beutler's bringing this amendment to the body and I appreciate him showing it to me and allowing me to sign on it with him. When I spoke yesterday I indicated that I felt that we, as a Legislature, should rather than simply take all personal property tax off and wait till a later legislative session to deal with the problem as was...as we...was presented to us in the Governor's proposal, I thought that we should, as Senator Beutler says to us, be quite up front and frank with the people on what we should or should not do in the area of exemptions. Inventory, of all of the exemptions that we have discussed in this body over the last couple of years and certainly this year, the inventory exemption is one that I think fairly across the board most people feel is one that should not be...type of personal property that should not be taxed across the board, both farm and business inventory. Certainly, as I go through my district, that's a concern of many, many of the taxpayers and the citizens of my district, and business owners, that inventories should be exempt as long as it's an across the board exemption applying to both business inventories and farm inventories. I also feel that we get around some of the constitutional problems by...that have been raised, by placing this in the Constitution at this point by allowing the citizens to vote on a specific exemption. I am going to vote for this and then if this doesn't pass, I think there are some other ideas floating around. I get back to my basic premise and that is that I think that rather than wait and pass the buck to ourselves, really, in the next Legislature, just wait at all, that we should do what other states have done in the area of exemptions and that is place those exemptions that we, as a body, feel are appropriate public policy to place in the Constitution, that there are certain exemptions that should be constitutionally mandated. Certainly, I think inventory is one of them. And that would leave business equipment and farm equipment as taxable property and I'm sure we can deal with other items of personal property as well as this debate goes on. I appreciate Senator Beutler's comments on economic development. I think that as we talk...economic development has always been an interesting concept. We talk about it and we discuss it and throw it out as the reason for doing lots of things. The way I look at economic development though it is a concept that we need to discuss and keep in the mix and keep in the balance. And as we take a look at how we determine our tax policy and how we put