

anybody you know, it may never have happened to anybody in the district that you represent. But I have seen it happen to people that I know, large swaths of territory in the district that I represent, and I've had letters from people in other parts of the state where their property was being taken. What this bill is attempting to do is to somewhat even out the playing field, to use that old cliché. I still think, even with the passage of 222, the law is tilted unfairly in the direction of these large outfits that are going to do the condemning. They have staffs of lawyers. They have people available to do all of the things that will be undertaken to condemn a person's property. The irony is that the property holder, whose property is to be taken, is paying taxes that help pay the costs of this outfit that is going to take the property. So what is being done by this bill is to say that the concept of court costs will not include the lawyer fees and expert witness costs of the one doing the condemning, in other words, the political subdivision, whatever it happens to be, or even the state. You all know that no political subdivision or the state, or one of these utility companies or operations is going to offer somebody an exorbitant amount of money. They're going to try to get away as cheaply as they can and while engaging in the so-called negotiation will always remind the person who is losing his or her property that if you challenge us in court, and you don't get 15 percent more than what we're offering, you've got to pay, you run the risk of paying not only the court costs but our lawyer fees and the expert witness fees. So you put that in your pipe, you smoke that overnight, then you come back tomorrow and decide if you want to appeal. And then they can tell you frankly, as I mentioned in the Judiciary Committee, we are going to pay you 13 percent less than what we deem is fair market value. And the landowner says, then I'm going to go to court, then they can bring out the law and say, okay, so the court agrees that we paid you 13 percent less, you've got to prove it was 15 percent less or you still run the risk of these extra costs. And they've got the landowner between a rock and a hard place. Don't always think of this in terms of two equal parties fighting each other. A huge operation like ConAgra, first of all, nobody is going to take any of their property. But you've got a small landowner, unsophisticated, who does not even know what this law is, and if you read it, wouldn't even understand it, coming against a large, powerful subdivision armed with lawyers, appraisers and others who can be in the intimidators. What we want to do today with this bill...