

SENATOR VRTISKA: And where will that put us in relation to the rest of the country as far as ethanol production?

SENATOR MCKENZIE: Well I believe once all those plants are up and running if they operate at the projected capacity they've talked about, we would be second.

SENATOR VRTISKA: Be second. I guess the point I want to make is that there is a bit of discussion in the country, as many of you know, at this time about environmental issues and about the fact that ethanol is a cleaner burning fuel than using gasoline and the other products that we use and there is some discussion about raising the amount of the percentage of ethanol that is used in gasoline in order to reduce the pollution in some of the areas that have so much pollution. And I guess the other point that I think needs to be at least suggested that the cartel in those countries who produce oil pretty much control what we pay for our gasoline and have been for years. I don't know if the fact that we're producing ethanol in this country, in fact, will have an effect on how they decide to price their oil with regards to the fact that if we would in fact, as they do down in some southern states, in Argentina for example, that use almost pure ethanol, if in fact, some of those cartels could become a little bit worried that maybe their sale of gasoline to this country might be reduced, that perhaps it would hold the cost of the product for all of us down because of the fear that they may, in fact, be...enough competition on the horizon certainly somewhere in the future that could have a detrimental effect on the amount of fuel that we have to buy from foreign countries. So I guess I look at the fact that if we're able to use a product that we grow and produce in our own country, our own farmers and people in agriculture, and certainly we're not playing in the hands of those who have somewhat abused this system in the past because they've had the ability...because they pretty much control the entire oil market. So I guess I'd have to think that we should look carefully, if we can get the production of ethanol up to where it would be a higher use, perhaps all of us would in the long term, at least in the long term, end up and be winners rather than losers. Thank you.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Senator Vrtiska. Senator Maurstad, followed by Senators Beutler and Chambers.

SENATOR MAURSTAD: Mr. President, unless something strange