

the body understands that, that it is necessary to meet the contracts that have been signed, and that we ought to move forward on that basis. And I would urge your support of the amendment.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. Senator Coordsen, followed by Senators Warner, Vrtiska and Stuhr.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the body, I think I would be less than accurate if I said that the funding of the EPIC program makes me nervous, and it does. Bear in mind that the EPIC program is, in fact, general economic development that benefits a great number of businesses and individuals in the State of Nebraska and it's been a concern of mine for some number of years that the funding of this program, though not all the benefits accrue to agriculture, the funding of the program might be laid upon the doorsteps of the checkbooks of the producers of the State of Nebraska. I don't know if this is the thing to do. I do know that, to the best of my knowledge, the organizations in Nebraska, the farm organizations, either are not in favor of any checkoff or are in favor of no more than one-half cent. There has been some agreement after the General File debate on 377 by some of the farm organizations that three-quarters of a cent would be a figure that agriculture could accept. Bear in mind that three-quarter...the one-quarter of a cent is projected to be \$10 million, \$10 million, out of the economy of the State of Nebraska that's transferred to the ethanol producers, to makeup part of the cost of the benefits that they have. The half-cent would be about 20 million, three-quarters is approximately \$30 million. I have, as I indicated, a certain amount of fear that a future Legislature, which is not going to be bound by any decisions we make on this bill in this session, might see fit, in some yet to be determined financial crunch, to shift more of the funding of this particular program, this economic development incentive, to production agriculture. I'm very reluctant, at this point in time, to support this amendment. I understand it's made in good faith. I probably won't know till it comes time to vote whether I will or not because it requires in outyears those funds to be actively appropriated by future members of the Legislature who may or who may not have participated in all of the agony that has gotten us to this place today and that has resulted in a tremendous investment, an investment that is more than half of what the projected Micron initiative would have been, where the employment is somewhere