

They think it's an unfair advantage to the rurals to become involved. So basically they were opposed to the bill.

SENATOR BROMM: Well, are the three largest utilities involved in economic development activities at the present time?

SENATOR SCHELLPEPER: I think they are in their own area. But they cannot get the funds through the USDA like the rural public powers could.

SENATOR BROMM: Is that because of the USDA regulations?

SENATOR SCHELLPEPER: Yes, because they're not rural, and so they couldn't...they don't have access to these funds whereas the rurals would, but they think it's an unfair advantage to the rurals so the Omaha, the Lincoln and Nebraska Public Power are opposed to this,...

SENATOR BROMM: Okay.

SENATOR SCHELLPEPER: ...and that's where it's coming from.

SENATOR BRMM: Thank you, Senator Schellpeper. I'm not going to belabor this, but it seems to me that that rationale is faulty. And if there are programs that are available to the large utilities that the smaller ones can't take advantage of, I would hope the smaller ones wouldn't say, well, we're not going to permit the larger ones to do their thing because we can't do it. That doesn't make any sense, and I think that's something we need to pursue. And I don't want to belabor the bill or delay it, so we won't do it here. But I appreciate your answers, thank you.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Bromm. Chair recognizes Senator Pedersen, followed by Senators Beutler and Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR PEDERSEN: Speaker Withem and members of the body, Senator, would you respond to some questions, please.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Preister.

SENATOR PREISTER: Certainly.

SENATOR PEDERSEN: Do not the utility boards, are they not