

insects? it's all, in my opinion, a part of the cost of doing business and it ought to be treated as an expense of the landowner or those who are seeking to protect their crop or to protect livestock. But, all of a sudden, with regard to larger predators we're going to treat them differently than we treat everything else and it's not going to be a landowner responsibility, it's not going to be a local government responsibility, it's going to be a state responsibility, and I think that's entirely inappropriate and going in entirely the wrong direction. How is animal control handled now? Well, it's either an individual responsibility or some counties, under their present authorities, have assisted in predator control and I passed out to you a map showing I think it's 34 counties or so that engage in some sort of assistance for predator control. Well, if the counties want to do that, then that's fine and that's appropriate and they, taken together, they have contributed \$183,000 to that effort, which has been available to match to some...for some federal funds. But look at this map and look what's happening in the state. Where would you think that predator control would be important? Probably in the Sandhills where they have the most cattle. And yet none of the counties in the Sandhills have seen fit to help their own ranchers in the matter of predator control. Those counties have obviously made the decision that that is a cost to the business person, a cost of doing business. If suddenly the state starts contributing, what do you think is going to happen? What I think will happen is that those counties that are contributing will quit contributing and the state money will be seen as the money that should be spent and probably the \$200,000 in state money will simply replace the \$183,000 in local county money. Why would I, as a county, contribute and some other county isn't contributing, especially then when it becomes state funded? In any event it seems to me that there is no justification for returning this to the category of a state expenditure, and that if you're going to return it to the category of expenditure, then why would you not logically expect in the future state assistance for insect...for insect control and state assistance for weed control? There's no logic. And so we would start down a path that I think is not an appropriate path. Thank you.

**SPEAKER WITHEM:** Thank you, Senator Beutler. Following Senator Beutler, we have Senators Dierks, Wehrbein, Jones, Schrock and Preister.

**SENATOR DIERKS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the body,