

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Wehrbein.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I would appreciate some interest in this because I rise to oppose Senator Beutler's amendment. And this represents a change in position for me since the time I have been here with animal damage control. I've always resisted the chance to put more money into this or any money. As an Appropriations Committee member and as a farmer, I felt strongly I was not going to be biased, I was going to try to be fair. I felt animal damage control probably is something that should be left locally. This year I changed my mind, and part of the reason for that is the fact that, as I look over the years, we allow agriculture, farmers and ranchers particularly, to raise wildlife but when we get to a problem, when there's economic damage, when we reach an economic threshold that causes damage, we leave them on their own. And I've seen some of the transcripts on the hearings, some of what Senator Beutler said, let them take care of themselves like they do weeds. The point is the farmers and ranchers can't take care of themselves and even some city dwellers can't take care of themselves, like you could "in the old days". If you have a problem with coyotes or blackbirds or pigeons or prairie dogs, the list may go...beavers, perhaps, you cannot go out and simply do what you had maybe done 50 years or 100 years ago. You...we've hamstrung local individuals to the point that they can't take care of themselves. And I understand coyotes pretty much is open year round but you must use a rifle. You cannot use poison. If you have a great increase in the amount of coyotes, you can't use poison, that is only under strict controls. You can't go out and shoot...I don't know whether you can shoot pigeons or blackbirds that are in a city or a village that are causing damage. Beaver dams are a problem in many areas. You can't go out and simply destroy the dam. And Senator Dierks referred to the one that actually happened in my county where someone tried to take it into their own hands and caused some damage. The point is with federal regulations and some state, but I think primarily federal regulations today, you've taken away the independence that we're talking about here. And we probably do have the ability to control most weeds, although we're getting to some areas now in species of flowers that, I think, I don't know that they have done any economic damage but certainly you don't want to do something with the wrong kind of a flower, a wildflower, today without getting in trouble. So the point is that I feel, I've come to feel and I come to support this and the committee agreed because