

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Senator Withem, members of the body, I rise in opposition to Senator Beutler's motion or amendment. I do it with some reservations because I certainly agree that we need to look every place we can to make cuts in the budget. But one of the problems we have and we've had it for a long time, of course, in my area of the state is coyotes and some of the people down there who had taken on themselves to control the coyotes found themselves in the position of not being about to buy the equipment that they were using to get rid of coyotes. They came to the County Board and asked us for help and, as most of you recognize, Pawnee County has been at 50 cents for seven years and it was difficult to find the dollars. But we did help them to bring predator control people down. And, speaking to Senator Preister's discussion, these people are professionals and they didn't just go out and kill everything that appeared. What they did is try to seek out those coyotes that were doing the damage and control those and the rest of them weren't a problem. So I think these professionals who have the knowledge to pick out and take care of the ones that are the so-called bad coyotes are the ones they were getting rid of. We also have quite a problem with beaver in our country and they've done a lot of damage to a lot of lakes and ponds in the area and there's no recourse because you're not able to go out and shoot them wantonly or just get rid of them just because you're upset about it. So it really takes a professional to come in. The question then comes down to who pays for it. But I guess because it's beneficial to all the people in the state, in the various counties and the various cities, it looks like it's probably an issue that the state should probably become involved in. And, by the way, Senator Beutler, the state does provide weed control through the Department of Agriculture, so there is money being spent for that purpose, that I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but just another avenue of trying to make things fair because it is difficult for the individual, individual landowner to keep ahead of some of these problems when there are restrictions on how you can control animals. You can't use the cyanide guns and the various methods that used to be used because you were basically killing every animal that came along, domestic or otherwise, and, of course, now that's illegal and should be. So I think what we're really saying is turn it over to the professionals, turn it over to the people who understand animals, who understand how to control animals that are the ones that cause the damage, remove those. And the people that I talked to that were having a lot of problem with sheep, coyotes