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PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Beutler. Senator Engel, to speak to the Beutler amendment.

SENATOR ENGEL: Madam Chairman, members of the body, really I'd like to direct one question to Senator Landis.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Senator Landis.

SENATOR ENGEL: If he would ans...respond, please. One thing, a statement I'd like to make. From what you tell about the record the last 18 months, as far as the record of the Legislature, it speaks very highly for the Legislature that's for sure. Thank you. One question, you talked about, when you deregulated the telephone rates, so forth, as far as the profits in the telephone companies and the bonuses and so forth. And I'm not here to defend telephone companies or any specific industry. However, have the rates themselves that the consumer is paying, have they gone up considerably?

SENATOR LANDIS: The rates have gone up in some cases, in some areas and not in others. Generally speaking, our rates are very competitive with the rest of the country and they always have been.

SENATOR ENGEL: Um-huh.

SENATOR LANDIS: Internal financing and shifts of money have kept the rates at a relatively reasonable rate, and yet have increased dramatically the amount of profits. If you were in another state, those profits would be part of what would be analyzed by a state administrator and would lower rates. If we were in another jurisdiction, our rates would be lower, even though they're reasonable in this state, because our profit margins are so much higher than everywhere else.

SENATOR ENGEL: Thank you very much. Again, in my area the people are not complaining about rates and/or services, and that's the reason I brought up that question. Another thing I'd like to mention is that the current climate in the state of Nebraska and across the country is the downsizing of government, such as our Nebraska Partnership Act, which our Lieutenant Governor has been heading up, trying to bring these different agencies together and to make them more efficient and to give more efficient service to those who they're supposed to be