

February 21, 1996 LB 1205

the Withem amendment.

SENATOR ELMER: Thank you, Senator. Senator Withem and Senator Wesely have addressed a historical, traditional types of considerations that we have and that we've always had this land for the protection of our school children. I would like to have everyone think about the change in the economic situation that we have in the last a hundred and twenty and thirty years. Over 90 percent of our population at the beginning of our statehood was known and actively involved in agriculture. At this point it's down to nearly 2 percent, with each individual requiring for their operation, many more...much larger investments and much larger tracts to manage in order to be economically viable, which shows how much less that land returns per acre than it did compared to the 1860s, '70s, and '80s. We have situations where our economic structure is radically different. I don't think standing on tradition and history has a great deal of argument in this body regarding this type of an economic investment. Perhaps some of this principal that might be derived from the sale of agricultural land could be invested in structures such as ConAgra occuppies, or Union Pacific may, or in condominiums in the growing Omaha-Lincoln area, and enhance our income, and let them then compete with private industry for the income of renters. I think that that would quickly be turned down by the people in Lancaster and Douglas counties as contrary to the practice that government follows. We're making a policy decision. I think that this decision should be made, and if it turns out that we are going the wrong way we can introduce legislation to reverse it, have another hearing, see what's going on. But at this time I see no value to delay and I intend to vote no on this amendment. Thank you, Senator Crosby.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Elmer. Senator Schimek, on the Withem amendment.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Yes, Madam President and members of the body, I haven't spoken on this issue and, in fact, have kind of been off the floor for some of the debate. But I guess I'm a little nervous about this bill. I am going to support the Withem amendment. Let me tell you why I'm a little nervous about this bill. As somebody who has sold real estate before I came into the Legislature and somebody who taught in the classroom and taught history and civics, I have, I have some respect for what the settlers in Nebraska did originally when they established