

April 2, 1996

LE 1114, 1177

SENATOR COORDSEN: Debate has ceased. Senator Maurstad, to close on your amendment to the amendment.

SENATOR MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciated the discussion that went on. I'm going to try to address some of the concerns as quickly as I can. I want everybody to remember that the status quo right now relative to this issue is that we currently have different levies for different classes of cities, so this amendment actually keeps us with the status quo. There isn't any question that this issue is going to be decided on the floor based on its merits. The only change or what we're looking at right now and what I want people to think about is the 70 cent limit for second class cities and villages is a 35 cent decrease from what they currently have the ability to levy. At 50 cents on the first class cities, it's still a 37.5 cent decrease in what they're current ability is. So I think that it's easy to see that we're not talking about letting them off, letting them off the hook. You know, I...some of the discussion revolved around schools. I understand that. As I said before, municipalities aren't special, quite the contrary. In fact, if you look at the facts that state aid to municipalities haven't increased since 1978, not at all. Let's look at what the increase in the school levy or school state aid has been since that point in time. The MRF funds were added a few years ago, a additional four and a half million dollars; two years later needed some funds, million and a half or a third of those funds that were originally appropriated were taken away. Rightfully so, municipalities are down on the totem pole relative to priority. I don't think there's any question that if it comes to providing resources for the schools and providing them for the municipalities, I, along with a majority of the senators in the Chamber, would certainly provide funds for the kids first, for the schools. I mean that's why state aid hasn't increased since 1978 for municipalities. The 1177, there was some comment...a comment that most of this funds are coming at the expense of Omaha and Lincoln. You know, about two and a half million dollars or possibly a little more than that certainly comes from there, but it's less than one cent of their levy to make up that difference. You know, I had an amendment that would have decreased Lincoln and Omaha to 40 cents, 5 cents, and I mean I'm sure you recognize what the reaction was...was to that. So I hope that people understand that we're saying we're willing to take a 35 cent, a 37.5 percent reduction in what our levy capacity is, but give us a fighting chance. My last