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just three thousand total. So I would ask you to consider this and...and to consider whether this might not be an appropriate solution to moving forward on the general well abandonment program, which, I can assure you presently, is not plugging as many wells as are being abandoned. So we need to do something. We need to move forward there. We need to step forward. Maybe this is the way to do it. Is this a good system? I put it to you. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Beutler. Your light is on next. Would you like to.... Chair recognizes Senator Baker.

SENATOR BAKER: Mr. Chair, members of the body, Senator Beutler poses an interesting question there, and I agree there is a problem with the plugging of domestic water wells, but this bill was designed to address simply oil wells under the jurisdiction of the Nebraska Oil and Gas Commission. It has the support of the industry. I do have a company that is an oil operating company. We met...I...my company did not personally meet with Mr. Sydow, the Director of the Oil and Gas Commission, however, he did have a large group of operators at a meeting in Sidney to address this issue and we came up with this bill. So what it is, is...is a bill designed to allow operators, not asking for any state support, but allows us to police ourselves, if you will, and provide the funds to plug these abandoned wells. And we are not encouraging plugging a well that might be economic some place down the line. We would anticipate capping this fund maybe three hundred thousand, I think it's...half a million dollars was mentioned but that, to me, that might be too high. We'll have to develop that through the rules and regulations of the commission. But, I need to back up a little bit. Each operator is bonded for \$25,000, a blanket bond which covers potential problems with an oil well. Whether you have a spill or plugging liability or surface conditions warrant a fine from the commission, then the state, the commission, can come back on that operator and if he supposedly goes bankrupt or something like that, why, they can draw upon this bond. And the problem arose that we have a couple operators in the state that have more potential liability than the bond is going to cover. That \$25,000 bond at \$5,000 per well is only going to plug 5 wells, obviously. So the industry said, let's take care of this problem ourselves; we'll assess each well at up to a \$200 per