

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office

March 22, 1999 LB 142

the EPIC Fund. I do appreciate the study or the conversation and the debate on this, this morning. And I firmly believe what I said a few minutes ago about needing the debate on this. And I have to decide whether to support or not support the germaneness rule in order to have the discussion. But I do oppose taking the money out of the EPIC Fund. The reason for that is the EPIC Fund was done...it has got some General Funds in it, but it's also had fertilizer tax, and it also has had corn checkoff money for the purpose of ethanol production. And I believe it would be breaking faith with agriculture, at this point, to divert this money to some other purpose, particularly the corn checkoff money. It is true that there is apparently going to be somewhat of a surplus in this fund of about 11.6 to 12 million dollars. And there are, not only the bill that Senator Wickersham mentioned in Revenue, but there is another bill that's in Appropriations Committee, and perhaps another bill. And you will be hearing the debate on that issue coming up. But I believe that many of us would prefer to see that money going to "incent" new production or expanded production in the state, other reasons that would be more in line with the intent of the original funding. And so, even though I support NRDs, and I think Senator Beutler is making some good points for NRDs, it puts me in a difficult dilemma of pitting one against the other, both of them agricultural issues. But I would much prefer and do support keeping the fund of the EPIC Fund for its original reason. And if we are to do something more for NRDs, which at this point I am not inclined to do, it ought to come from some other source, and I would prefer actually General Funds, of all the alternate sources that are being proposed and being looked at, if truly they deserve to have more funding, and that case hasn't been made to me, at this point. I would prefer General Funds. Having said that, I think there will be a move afoot to do some looking at this over the next few weeks. Perhaps it takes a summer study. I don't know if we have time to do the summer study on all of these, but I do think we need to look at all of them, and not just NRDs in that framework. We ought to be considering the community colleges, perhaps even SIDs, I'm not so sure of that either, but community colleges and others have some needs, I think we ought to look at them all in one, and I believe that's what a summer study would do. But to take it out of the EPIC Fund is not in my interest at all, so therefore I do oppose suspending the rule on this particular one