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FLOOR DEBATE

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SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I just wanted to speak quickly against the motion to indefinitely postpone. I too wanted to reiterate the fact that...keep in mind that the Isaak Walton League and the Sportsmens Clubs have supported this bill, this kind of fee structure, this kind of process. The Sportsmens Clubs, the federation of the various kinds of clubs, the fishermen, the fisherpersons, the hunters of different types of animals and birds, let me assure you, they're not always an easy group to get along with. They very definitely have their opinions about hunting seasons, about what's right in terms of the way animals are handled, about habitat and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of certain types of habitat, a whole number of issues. And believe me, if they don't think a fee is right, or if they didn't think that this process and fee structure was right, you wouldn't see their names on the committee statement. But beyond that, let me point out one other very important thing that is happening here in Nebraska and nationally that makes it a very careful calculation on the part of the Parks Department as to whether they should increase fees. And they would only do so, I'm sure, reluctantly. The fact of the matter is that nationally, over the last 10 and 20 years, the number of people interested in hunting and fishing is going precipitously down. And those who are interested in those activities have to be careful about how much is charged to engage in those activities; otherwise they will have the effect of driving the customer base, so to speak, down even further and defeating their purpose. The...those who are interested in hunting and fishing, their numbers go down for a variety of reasons, they say. One, because of the urbanization of populations generally, and the difficulty of interesting...of getting urban kids to take an interest in these activities. The increased activities of animal rights groups and others who don't like hunting and fishing altogether. I mean, if you kill all these fee bills, that's certainly a way of killing hunting and fishing, if that's what you want to do. In that case, you should vote for the motion to indefinitely postpone. But I wanted to point out that whole debate that's going on, and the problem that's faced by Game and Parks in terms of generating interest in these activities. And I would certainly suggest that they try to interest more low-income kids with better and cheaper programs, special programs for them, to