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FLOOR DEBATE

February 4, 2003 LB 72

SENATOR LANDIS: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, George Kilpatrick reminded me that we needed to do this, and I was grateful for Senator Connealy, who's the Vice Chair of the Revenue Committee, for offering this amendment. It just lets us balance the money coming in and the General Fund needs. It allows us to stretch over time, if we need to, the reimbursement of the General Fund while spending some... sending some money to the purpose for the bill and accomplishing both objectives simultaneously, rather than doing one first and then the other. I will tell you a little bit about my feelings about LB 72, because I'm going to be voting for it. I have had a number of qualms about the State Fair and the recent direction of the State Fair. It seems to me that a number of the core services have gone off. I think the Husker Days in Grand Island is a very powerful event that seems to have a lot of following. A number of the ancillary events that were on the State Fairgrounds have been moved to 84th in Lincoln. I'm not sure that that was a wise thing, but it's an accomplished fact. We have a relatively large asset that is in decline at the moment. A lot of rehabilitation and refurbishing of buildings that are relatively old need to be done. And I've said to myself, gosh, you know, maybe this is an asset that should be moved back into the private sector. But this Legislature, in the last year or two, has given the State Fair a reprieve. I did not happen to vote for it, but the Legislature did. It reconstituted the board. It brought it into greater responsibility and accountability with the state. The general direction of that was to say we are continuing to be committed to the State Fair process. So I regard LB 72 as consistent with that recent public policy that we've staked out. However, what the Revenue Committee did, and I think it's a wise thing, is they said they give a three-year sunset to this. If we are to have the fair rejuvenate, if we are to have the fair reclaim its historical strength in this state and to make an increase in its profitability, then I think we need a limited time to test that public policy out, and if it's not working, rethink it. In the event our new management...and, by the way, we have some exciting new leaders in the State Fair movement...if our new leaders can bring the State Fair around and show us opportunity, show us growth, my guess is this body will respond with continuing on with an LB 72. If we are no better off today than