

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

February 18, 2003 LR 18

everybody contributing. I think that's very defensible, and I don't think we need to back up or apologize for that. The other issue I'd like to respond to is, Senator Landis mentioned Senator Coordsen and his concern with this issue, and the fact that, oh, it's sort of a copay idea. If you're going to have someone vote for an override, well, if they have to make at least some sort of a payment, if it's going to cost them at least something, well, that's important, because a person may focus only on their financial interest in a public issue, not on the public good. Well, again, going back to my first point, I think that's an issue that we need to fight. I think most citizens of the public...I'm encouraged...do believe that they...or do respond according to what they feel is the genuine public need. Sure, if it becomes an overwhelming burden financially, that has to come into play, certainly. But they're going to focus in their decision making on what is needed as a part of the general public good. Senator Coordsen, I think Senator Landis was right, was particularly concerned about override elections that might occur in an area where you have a small community with...or rural community with a school surrounded by ag land, that people in the community may be encouraged to vote for the override. Those in the ag land area would end up having to pay for it. The only way you're really going to correct that is if you set up a voting mechanism where you vote...your vote counts in proportion to the number of dollars you'll pay if the issue passes. And clearly, we don't do that. I don't think it's wise to do that. And this would not get us anywhere near doing that. This would simply make a sort of a simple and imprecise correction, which puts us further away from the notion of encouraging people to cooperate, state and local government, on the provision of important public services, and in addition, I feel, creates, in a sense, a class of victims--people who are low-income, are genuinely needy in terms of the homestead exemption, and end up getting stuck besides. I would emphasize, finally, this is not needed. The homestead exemption program is statutory. If we're too rich on that, we can cut back. If we've got it targeted to the wrong people, we can change that. There are statutory changes that we can make without doing a constitutional amendment that I think can address the issues that Senator Redfield has raised, and they are valid issues, except for the issue where you are going