

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

February 20, 2003 LB 282

sales tax and food, what does food mean? You can say yes; you can say no. So long as you're a retailer, it's no difficulty because you can code your computer program yes or no, so long as everybody is using the same definition. It won't be difficult. We can live with that, no problem. If you want to say you're taxing plumbing, fine. If you're not taxing plumbing, that's okay. But we need to know what that means when you say you're taxing plumbing. If it's the same, we have a binary choice in our computer, yes or no, does tax it or doesn't tax it, so long as we're using the same definitions. What does streamlined try to do? It creates the definitions, not whether you tax it or not. By allowing us to control the definitions or allowing us to get on the same page for definitions, it allows the person who's coding the computer program as to what the state's choice was as to whether to tax it or not. And isn't that what you care about? Isn't that your tax policy, what we choose to tax and what we don't? What this streamlined will do for us is to say, when we're thinking of a snack tax, if we want to be able to access streamlined, we need to use essentially that working definition for what a snack tax is. But if we want to add more, we can. Ultimately, it doesn't tell us what we have to tax. It doesn't tell us what we have to exempt. That is our decision. Where streamlined works is if you can get states to agree that when they use a phrase they all mean the same thing, and then they get to decide yes or no as to whether they tax it. That is a far cry from the stripping of Nebraska's right to set tax policy that Senator Beutler has described for you, and it's a pretty good trade-off. We'll help share in the process of writing definitions, and then we, and only we, will decide whether we want to tax or not tax consistent with those definitions. And where we will get into trouble is when we choose to step away from those definitions, and at the point in which we are not in substantial compliance we've charted our own course, and that's true. I think streamlined is a good idea. I think the definitions that they set are a sensible thing to do and I do not see this as a diminution of the sovereignty of the state of Nebraska. If you want AM0430 I'll live with it and I'll continue to support the bill. I don't think it's necessary. But I wouldn't pass AM0430 on the theory that streamlined strips Nebraska of sovereignty, because it doesn't.