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FLOOR DEBATE

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PRESIDENT HEINEMAN:      Thank you, Senator Preister.      Senator Vrtiska.

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor, members of the body. All of us had a good long weekend, and I guess I just wanted to bring up a couple of reasons why I took this as a priority bill this year. First of all, this plant is the largest plant in Nebraska, and it serves 91 of the 93 counties. I think we have to keep that in mind. This is a need that's...by the general public power and it, obviously, is cheapest power as they can get. And this plant, as to the public power in Nebraska, serves cheap public.. cheaper public power for the customers than plants in other states that are, in fact, profit-making plants. I do appreciate Senator Beutler's interest in trying to address some of the issues that he feels he has a concern about, and certainly we need to have a concern about these issues because it's in the best interest of the state to make sure that we cover all the bases before we enter into this proposition of allowing indemnification for a private company to manage a public power plant in Nebraska. First of all, I have to respond to Senator Preister. Obviously, this is not the total answer as of right now. This is one of the options that NPPD is seeking in order to keep this plant in operation which, of course, is important to the people in this state. There are other options and they will certainly be reviewed but we can't move with anything until we get the indemnification issue resolved. And last Thursday, we talked about, at some length about the issue of indemnification and how it should be handled, and Senator Beutler has taken that issue up as a part of his discussion in trying to come up with a solution. And, again, I applaud him for that because I think it's important that we, in fact, make sure that the things that we're doing, the three points that Senator Beutler brought up this morning I thought were important and they are things that I'm glad that...I'm hoping we will be able to take the issue up and perhaps move this bill this morning, and then on Select be able to talk about some of the amendments that may be necessary in order to move this bill to Final Reading. I am not going to take up a lot of time, but I will be available as will Senator Schrock and certainly Senator Preister and Senator Beutler to answer questions if you have any. I, again, think it's