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FLOOR DEBATE

March 11, 2003 LB 619

beneficial use of ground water or not. But keep in mind, the areas of withdrawal that they're concerned about all flow downstream. They all go by Ashland, where your well fields are for Lincoln. They all go by the proposed well field in Omaha. So there's going to be competing uses for this water. Any withdrawal of water in the western part of the state has the potential to enable the impact of the eastern part of the state. And so the concern about withdrawals for interstate or intrastate transfers I think is something that people have been interested in on a statewide basis.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator, I certainly...I'd certainly agree with you. And I wouldn't imagine that there would be very many circumstances, if any, where you would want to balance things, or where a balance of things made sense. But I'm just wondering whether, under this proposal, you could do that, in the sense that there doesn't seem to...it all seems to be a negative side. There doesn't seem to be any positive side. Or is there a positive side in this equation someplace that would be helpful to my thinking on this?

SENATOR SCHROCK: You're thinking right, Senator Beutler. I believe that if we pass this bill as is, it would discourage the transfer of water out of this state. And I believe that's probably the intent of the bill. We heard very strong from the NRDs. You may recall, we had two bills introduced, one by Senator Loudon, one by myself, that would have put a price on water. And the NRD community did not want to go there. They said, we don't want our water to...

SPEAKER BROMM: One minute.

SENATOR SCHROCK: ...be sold at any price. And so neither one of those bills were considered. And you understand, we didn't put a price on this water, because whenever you put a price on the water, you all of a sudden have established maybe what the water is worth. And so you'll notice this bill has no mention of an excise tax or anything on it that would be imposed by the state should the water transfer take place.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Okay. Thank you, Senator.