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FLOOR DEBATE

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to improve facilities that are of interest to visitors. The idea is to have visitors and tourists to stay in the area longer. It is important to note that this tax, which is not mandated, is not paid by the hotels and motels. Instead, they only collect it, and even receive a collection fee of 3 percent. So they actually benefit from the lodging tax. The people from out of state or from other regions are the ones who are paying the tax, and not the hotel and motel people. If you'll notice in the map that's been handed out, that that's a... Interstate 80 runs across Nebraska, and most of the cities that are along the interstate, you can notice that they have an increase in lodging tax revenue from those areas. So it's quite important that we do something along our Interstate 80. Some people say that the taxes are already too high in some of the Omaha and Douglas County, but LB 726 does not affect Douglas County. In their local options, they already have the ability to collect this additional 2 percent tax. Therefore, whatever happens in Douglas County, as far as LB 726 goes, is completely irrelevant. If Douglas County considers their tax too high with their current situation, they can address the issue and reverse the tax rate if they so desire to do so. It's really that simple. Outside of Douglas County, there are many tourist facilities in the state that need repairs, but they have to rely solely on private donations. Therefore, they suffer because of the instability and sometimes difficulties associated with raising private funds. Planned projects go unfinished, and buildings go unpainted, and some roads stay unpaved. And this is absolutely unacceptable if we're going to promote tourism. The tourism industry can be a gold mine if we simply allow it to be, and I'm a firm believer of that. We haven't even begun to tap into its potential. And in case you didn't know, Nebraska has many tourist attractions, because, for instance, do any of you know where Crazy Horse's final resting place was? And also, do you know where Camp Sheridan was? Also, there's chalk mines in Scotia. Old Jules' homestead is mentioned in Mari Sandoz's books. These are all tourist attractions that people from other states come to visit to see these locations every year. And this is what we need to promote, is our destination sites in Nebraska. Tourism will be what we make it. And by advancing LB 726, I hope to use this to promote our tourism, generate more income for our local counties. This is something that's done on