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FLOOR DEBATE

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are collected in our county, Platte County, any Visitors Promotion Funds, are collected by the county, they are held in an account by the county, but they are not used for the general fund, they are not used by the county; they are only used under the direction of the county visitors committee. They have the authority of the funds. Actually, the county board of supervisors or commissioners have no authority over these funds. They are by this committee and they're used for promotion purposes. So that...I'm positive on that, and that is the way they're held. That is all the comments I have on the amendment now. I do want to speak to the bill later.

SENATOR ENGEL: Thank you, Senator Stuthman. The Chair recognizes Senator Stuhr.

SENATOR STUHR: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the body. I didn't realize this amendment was coming up, but I do oppose the amendment. I feel very strongly that the money should go directly to that County Visitors Fund and not be put in the general fund. I just wanted to applaud Senator Louden for bringing this bill, because I do believe that tourism is very important to the state of Nebraska. It will provide an opportunity for these counties, if they want to, and I think that is the key. And we've talked about it before. This is permissive. The counties, if they decide to do this, may then adjust and add that extra tax. But I think particularly since 9-11 we're seeing a lot of people throughout the country that are traveling by car. And what better opportunity can we have to entice some of those people off of Interstate 80 to visit some of our other communities in the state. I think this is a great opportunity. Again, permissive type of legislation. I've done some traveling that...I remember last year I was in Philadelphia. Looking at our hotel bill, after you get ready to leave, was another item. Many of the occupancy taxes...and many of you have traveled back East, Washington, D.C.,...are as much as 20 percent. But there was also another item on this bill, was energy tax. It was 3 percent additional tax, an energy tax. And of course...I mean, we all...we pay it, because that's part of the bill. And we don't, certainly, ask a motel or a hotel, well, you know, what are your taxes, before you decide to stay in that place. So I think it's a great idea to allow these