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LB 367

SENATOR BEUTLER: ...for whatever reasons. I don't know if the emergency wasn't the same or what. But now it's reappeared in the form of an amendment to another bill and it hasn't had a public hearing. It apparently is bypassing the process that it failed to succeed at a year ago. So I'm not sure this is a good process thing that's happening, just to begin with. But to the extent that...and my second observation might be with regard to that process, I think one of the reasons that the committee didn't want to advance the bill last year was because they thought that this was one of the types of grants that the Environmental Trust would normally take care of and would consider. Matching federal funds is certainly something that they like to do. But no grant application was ever forthcoming from the city of Omaha for this money. So what you're doing, you're turning the Environmental Trust grant program into a legislative grant program. You're saying, city of Omaha, you can come in here and just take what you want out of this fund, and the rest of us will go through the grant process. And I don't think that's what we want to make of or to become the Environmental Trust. We want that to be a process where projects go through on their own merit, no matter where they come from in the state, and they are treated in accordance with their merits. I would think this one would rank very, very high, having...knowing something about the criteria of the Environmental Trust, and I do not understand why they haven't gone through the grant process, even though the committee asked them to a year ago and nothing happened. So if we're...if we feel inclined to do this, I would think that Senator Schrock's suggestion, that it come out of the Education Innovation Fund, the lottery money that's being siphoned through the Education Innovation Fund, because that's not being used for education directly right now anyway. It's going into the General Fund. If you took a portion of that, it would be \$300,000 that didn't go into the General Fund and, Senator Wehrbein is right, we would be paying for it ultimately out of General Funds. But that's the way we pay for almost everything and it seems to me appropriate that we vote this up or down on the basis of General Funds if we're inclined to be voting something up and down on...as an amendment to a bill in this manner. But that would be a far better process than saying, city of Omaha, you come in