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FLOOR DEBATE

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body, I rise in support of Senator Thompson's amendment. If you people would just listen for a minute and understand how dire condition this state is in as far as building maintenance is concerned, you wouldn't have any doubts about trying to protect this fund that was...this 2 cents that was put back in there. We struggled before and I would say that any of you who voted to give the money to the other project would be ashamed of yourself enough that you would support this piece of legislation to put that money back. We traveled all over the state in...as I...as we talked about it a couple years ago, trying to determine where we could best utilize funds to restore some of the downtrodden buildings in this state, and Senator Thompson is absolutely correct. There are some fire/life safety measures out there that absolutely and positively should be taken care of. If that doesn't happen, this state could be subject to tremendous lawsuits because of the inability to provide the kind of safety in some of these buildings that should be done. Should have been done already, but we can't do things before we do them, and now is the time to get them done. So I have to stand in support of this. It's, to me, it's one of the issues that is tremendously important to the future of this state and to the people that we are pledged to serve. And I'm talking about people in institutions where they don't have any choice of where they're at. We're talking about veterans' hospitals, we're talking about many of the institutions of this state that provides this kind of service. And I think it would be a crime if we, in fact, don't listen to what Senator Thompson said and recognize that this is a desperate situation that should be taken care of. So with that, Mr. President, I thank you and I certainly hope you'll support this amendment. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Vrtiska. Senator Dwite Pedersen, did you wish to address this amendment? Thank you. Senator Thompson, there are no other lights on. Did you wish to close on your amendment?

SENATOR THOMPSON: Yes, thank you. Again, what this amendment does is puts the new 2 cents of earmark for the Building Maintenance Fund, which restores it to its 1996 level, under the hold harmless that the other...a number of the other funds have and that the first 5 cents has, so that there isn't slippage