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FLOOR DEBATE

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going to get into the debate on road construction. I'm not standing for the amendments. I'm, rather, rising to make a comment on the language that we use, and to basically affirm that we have a right to be having this debate. There have been some implying that this is a trust and a sacred thing and we can't change it. Well, it's not a trust. It's not constructed like a trust. And we have a perfect right to look at it and decide what we want to do with it. So I want to affirm that. We had a sheet passed out earlier, and I find it very interesting wording: the Highway Fund, Nebraska's investment in its future. I agree. That's an investment. Then it says, it's economic development. I agree. It's economic development. Then it says it's a promise with the people of Nebraska. Nonsense. A promise to people would be something that they knew about. And I defy you to find five out of ten persons who would say yes to the question, do you think 100 percent of the Nebraska highway...or, the gas fund goes to our Highway Fund? They don't know that. Even more so with the sales tax on a new vehicle. I have asked many persons. Every person I've asked has assumed that we're getting that money, and in fact complaining about, we get this huge amount of money, \$1,000...they must be buying a very nice vehicle...\$1,000 going to us. So there's no promise here. I think we have a perfect right to make this discussion. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator. Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I want to point out...I passed out another piece of paper to you to show you what the entire budget of the Department of Roads is. It's \$590,816,648. And that's an increase, over the last biennium budget, from \$545,734,933. And this amendment, FA1361, is \$16.9 million from that budget. That's a 2.8 percent cut with this amendment. Very minimal. But \$16.9 million is a lot of money. And this is a cut. We've been asking for cuts. This is a cut. The people did not vote on this. This was done legislatively. We have funds that the people did vote on that we've taken. And I think the Environmental Trust and the education fund are two that come from the lottery, and those were what the people had voted on, the environment and education. But this was done legislatively as a way to fund our