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LB 393, 536

to the General Affairs Committee. The bill was advanced to General File. I do have General Affairs Committee amendments. (AM0740, Legislative Journal page 798.)

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Hudkins, to open on advancement of LB 536.

SENATOR HUDKINS: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the body. LB 536, and then the committee amendment, which is part of LB 393, are meant to encourage the growth and the development of Nebraska farm wineries. Many years ago, during the early part of the twentieth century, there was a thriving wine industry in the state. It's estimated that somewhere around 5,000 acres of grapes were grown in eastern Nebraska alone. But because of the combined effects of Prohibition, the Depression, a significant drought, the herbicide 2, 4-D, and a 1933 government program guaranteeing prices for row crops, grapes were ploughed under, and other crops were planted in their places. Grapes are currently the seventh-largest agricultural commodity, and the largest fruit crop grown in the nation. Today, there are more than 200 acres of grapes being grown statewide. Now, that's a long way from where we were 100 years ago, but it is increasing. Likewise, wine-related alternative crops, like apples, cherries, raspberries, and honey, are all viable crops for this state. Several years ago, I introduced legislation to create the Nebraska Grape and Winery Board. Only two Nebraska wineries were in operation then: James Arthur Vineyards near Raymond, and Cuthills winery (sic) near Pierce. Today, there are eight successful wineries in the state, and before long we will have five others. Nebraska's wineries have proven that they can hold their own with the best producers in the country, or even in the world, for that matter. Clearly, wine and grape production are not fly-by-night undertakings in the state. They're here to stay. And with a little encouragement, they're capable of phenomenal growth. The best type of encouragement that we can give them legislatively is to remove some of the impediments to their continued growth, and that is what LB 536 would do. Specifically, this bill will do two things. Number one, it would change current language that refers to "small, local winery operations." That language would be changed to "farm winery." And the second thing that it would