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FLOOR DEBATE

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growers, and they have stepped up to the plate. You're going to see a bill later in the session that increases the corn checkoff. Reluctantly, they agreed to that and I can understand that. I'm a corn producer also, but I see the benefits of contributing to the fund and, hopefully, recruiting some more ethanol plants to the state. But on a bigger picture, how does it benefit the state of Nebraska, the citizens? In local areas, to begin with, there are jobs created out there. My county has a total population of fewer than 3,000 people. We're going to create 30 to 35 new jobs out there, and they are not minimum wage jobs. And in a small, rural community, that's a major factor. That trickle-down effect is going to spread out to a whole lot of retailers in the whole area. The property tax base, this is a \$46 million project, our property tax base is going up, thereby, relieving some pressure on real estate, farm real estate, personal residences, and so on. It benefits everyone in Hitchcock County. To broaden out the benefits some further, as I said with Senator Chambers, ethanol price, our cost is going to go down. We are going to lower the price of our retail fuel, and I can make that commitment. We will do it. We did last summer. At one time I think we were 2 to 3 cents, I know we were 2 to 3 cents a gallon less on no-lead that was blended with ethanol. Our sales were twice of what our regular no-lead gasoline was. It's a price-driven situation where people can save 2, 3 cents a gallon. I know out at the interstate in the area of York and so on, ethanol was priced 4 cents a gallon where there is a plant right there and the transportation costs are nil to get it to the retailer. And I'm sure, and I don't have the exact figures, I think we could get them, but at one time I believe last summer when ethanol was priced cheaper than no-lead, ethanol-blended fuel was making up at least 50 percent of the market share. So how does it benefit the rest of the state? Lower fuel prices. Everyone who buys fuel, with the exception of maybe Senator Chambers, and there are some others that aren't going to buy it, but they have the opportunity to lessen the cost of driving their vehicle. And if anyone has been paying attention to the crude oil market the last couple of weeks, it's gone up several dollars a barrel. And that makes ethanol all the more attractive in the state of Nebraska, driving up demand. I think yesterday's close on West Central or West Texas Sweet crude was 35, almost 36 dollars a