

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

March 2, 2004

LB 962

time, and they did really represent people from all over the state. I did want to share one statement from Dick Mercer, who was a task force member, and: In all of the 30 years I've had the honor working on water issues, this has been one of the most intense 18 months, and hopefully one of the most successful undertakings in looking at water changes that needed to come about. And this is...and these recommendations that are found in this committee statement, I believe, are just the beginning. They are a step forward. They are proactive. I think most everyone wanted to actually agree that we don't want...that water is a very precious resource and we don't want to have what happened to Texas and Oklahoma, that they actually depleted their water resources. We don't want that situation to happen in Nebraska. So actually, what the task force recommended, and Senator Schrock pointed that out very well, that we would continue with the basic components of existing surface water and ground water, and that it be left in place. Many of that...many of you remember and I know that Senator Beutler worked very hard on LB 108, and when I say that this is just a building block or another tool, that certainly began the work in this area. But we did want to take a more proactive approach to the integrated management of surface water and hydrologically connected ground water, and that was one of the things that we could see if we could balance these two. Just a little bit of history, we know that ground water, since the natural resource districts were established, and we have 23 of those, that they really are the mechanism that does the local control, and you'll see a picture of that...

SENATOR JANSSEN: One minute.

SENATOR STUHR: ...on the second page of all of those natural resource districts. And ground water is under a system of correlative rights where we all share and share alike, and regulated through the natural resource districts. Surface water, however, is on an appropriation system and it is regulated by the Department of Natural Resources, and regulated differently in that those water rights are first in time, first in line. So it is very much different than what ground water. But what the bill tries to do is bring both of the groups together and, as was stated before, any disputes between the