

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

March 3, 2004

LB 962

think it's a path we need to start down, and this is a good start.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Okay. Thank you very much.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senators Chamber (sic) and Beutler. Senator Stuhr.

SENATOR STUHR: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the body. I believe that funding for this bill is critical. As a member of the task force, I believe that we worked very, very hard in putting together this legislation that is so important, not only to agriculture, but to everyone in the state. I believe I mentioned yesterday that water, I believe, is one of the most precious resources we have in this state. The other precious resource, of course, is people. But I wanted to make several comments about the importance of it to not only the economic future of our state but also the environmental future of our state. But I think that all of us know that in the last few years, and I think Senator Beutler particular, since he's been involved in water issues and served on the Natural Resources Committee and served as Chair of that committee for many years, that in the last few years we've been involved in a number of lawsuits against the state of Nebraska. Those lawsuits have cost us tens of millions of dollars, and we have been told each time, as we go through, that we need to strengthen our statutes, our water statutes. And that is why this task force came about, and that is the work that we set about doing in the last 18 months. Currently, laws regarding surface water and ground water are generally separated. What this piece of legislation has tried to do is look at the hydrological connection between the surface water and ground water. That is why we need funding. We need funding for data collection. We don't want to be spending money just on he said, they said, but we want to base it on scientific information. I think that Senator Wehrbein spoke correctly in that this funding should come from the General Funds, because it does affect each of us in this state. I found some information regarding...and I mentioned that yesterday as I spoke, that we certainly don't want to happen to Nebraska what happened in Texas and Kansas and Oklahoma, and this piece of legislation is generally proactive,