

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

March 4, 2004

LB 962

SENATOR KREMER: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the Legislature. As I was thinking about this, had plenty time to think about it, water is the natural resource that we have in Nebraska. If you look at Wyoming, they have coal. Wyoming is one state that does not even have a revenue shortfall because of their natural resources of coal. Colorado has mountains and ski slopes. To think that only the coal companies or the ski resorts are the only ones that benefit from that natural resource is ridiculous. And we know that Nebraska, without our water, we rank about in the top three in corn production, in livestock production, in exports. We export about a third of our produce from Nebraska, which I mentioned the other day helps in the balance of trade of our nation. I think agriculture products are about the only positive side of our balance of trade that we have in this country. To think it's not a benefit to the whole state and that we should only tax some wells for irrigators is definitely wrong, I think. The most profound impact is in the western part of the state where I think one of the outcomes of the Water Policy Task Force was to find the correlation between ground and surface water. In the past, the ground water people have been able to pump, and surface water hasn't, which has made a tremendous impact on them. We need to do something that helps everyone when there is a correlation there. In central part of Nebraska, we have a deep aquifer and I'm not sure there's that same connection. Our water level has actually increased from 1980 up until about 2001. It has decreased in the last couple years, but not back to where it was in 1980, and I think it will...the water table will come up again when it starts to rain. But I think the outcome of the task force and the legislation before us is that we want to be proactive and not drain our resources, which I think can last for a long time if we are proactive. If we do nothing, then we can keep draining away, and especially in the western part of the state where there is not water in the reservoirs to irrigate. I think it'd be completely unfair to tax those people. And I just saw some statistics this morning that showed, in the western part of the state, the net income was a negative in many, many areas in the western part of the state. Central part was up this year. The people that are probably going to get restricted on water are the ones that are not going to make any money, and then we tax their well when we restrict