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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 962

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. I'm going to rise in support of Senator Chambers' amendment, and again, kind of tongue in cheek, say that I appreciate his efforts. I think it's appropriate what he's trying to do, and that is draft legislation that represents what we're intending to do, but do it in a form that is understandable. And I think that's appropriate. The area of the state that I represent also includes a small body of water called Lake McConaughy. Now I recognize fully that when we start talking about how much water is used for one purpose versus another, that can be a very divisive issue. I've had this discussion in my legislative district. All of you have received letters from my legislative district. I have expressed to them this point, and I think it is valid. If we as a state of Nebraska want to divide ourselves amongst the use of water, we will all lose, we will all lose. Now when we get down to talking about what we already have in the law, we have a preference system with domestic water, we have irrigation second...or agriculture, excuse me, second, industrial third. That's in statute. This process of the Water Policy Task Force, the introduction of LB 962, has created an understanding in society about what is actually in our laws. We have attorneys out there who never knew that there was a preference system in our laws that designed to give domestic a benefit over ag and down that process. They weren't aware of that until recently. This has been productive in having the discussion. As I mentioned earlier, McConaughy is in my district. I'm in a unique position. I represent those users above McConaughy, who Central Nebraska Irrigation District would like to have their water, and I also represent those below McConaughy, who are in that group. When we start talking about whether we should settle with Wyoming on different suits, or we start talking about what we as a state should be doing in regards to Wyoming or Colorado, I don't only have both sides of that issue, I've got multiple sides of that issue based on how it affects them. And what we're trying accomplish, from my perspective in dealing with my constituents, is what's in the best interest of all Nebraskans. It's a very delicate balance, because whisky is for drinking and water is for fighting and they're circling the wagons out home. Because without the opportunity for that