

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

March 4, 2004

LR 209

Legislature, fair questions raised by Senator Smith and Senator Thompson. I would characterize Senator Smith's perspective as where's the local contribution? How significant is it? Is it a fair contribution? Could Lincoln do more rather than look to this mechanism? In the last six years, we have averaged about \$300,000 of state money to the State Fair. From 1998 to 2002, 2004, the state of Nebraska wound up giving over six years a million nine to the State Fair. Since May of 2003, the local foundation which receives money from across the state but is largely paid by local efforts, in not six years but in the time since May of 2003, the local sponsorships and contributions has been \$330,000. In other words, we have done in about...since May of 2003, the local contribution has rivaled if not eclipsed state contribution for the State Fair. Eighty-one percent of the sponsorship money for the State Fair and donations came from Lincoln businesses. So of this \$330,000, the vast, vast majority came from Lincoln and that amount of support is, essentially, equal to what the state gives the State Fair. I'd have to say that's a pretty good chunk. I'd have to say that's a pretty healthy contribution. I would say that we're in the middle of a wake-up call and that wake-up call has produced that activity since May, 2003. What the future holds is uncertain. But the continuing local support and the strength of the local support I think will take a cue from the desire of the rest of the state to make sure that the State Fair does ultimately succeed, which is the success of the constitutional amendment. So local contributions, at this point, in the last year it's at or above what the state contributes. And of the local effort, 80 percent of that comes from the city of Lincoln. Now what about Senator Thompson's arguments, because there is a couple of arguments there. One of them is the argument there are higher needs and that is for each of us to decide whether or not we want this money available for the direction of the Legislature and to make sure it doesn't go to the State Fair. Now at this moment, the money goes to environment and to the education fund. And, in fact, if you listened to Senator Thompson's argument, it's internally inconsistent. One of the things she said was, gosh, we promised the public that this money would be spent for natural resources and environment and education. That was what the original constitutional amendment was sold on to the public. And then, secondarily, this money should be available for the