

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

March 17, 2004      LB 962

SENATOR SCHROCK: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, this may surprise you, but I have confidence that this body will do the right thing when the time comes. And I don't know what that is. I do know that the Environmental Trust was voted upon by the people of Nebraska. Half the money from the lottery is supposed to go to the Environmental Trust. It pains me to take money from the Environmental Trust. And for those of you in rural Nebraska to say, let's just grab the money and run with it, the Environmental Trust does a lot of good things in rural Nebraska. And I do appreciate that. They've done a lot of good things with our irrigation districts, with our NRDs. And I...it pains me to take their money. And the citizens of the state did vote on the lottery, and half the money was supposed to go to the Environmental Trust. I think this water study is probably an appropriate place to spend some of that. But I don't like doing a water grab. I don't like doing a money grab. But I think the prudent thing to do here is to advance LB 962. Between now and Select File, we will have a round of debate on the budget, and we can kind of get an idea of what kind of a handle we have. My personal preference is to take \$1.5 million of General Fund money, and then try to get grants for the rest of the \$1 million. I think funding this task force with anything less than \$2.5 million is not putting our money in the right place. We need to fund it. And of course, as you know, the original intent was to go for \$4.7 million. I don't think we have to go two and three years out. We just have to solve the immediate problem. There will be a budget discussion next year, and there will be requests for money for the Water Task Force issues. But my preference would be to advance LB 962 to Select File. I'm certainly willing to talk to Senator Wehrbein and members of the Appropriations Committee. They have a difficult task this year. I don't envy any of them. I did serve two years on the Appropriations Committee, when times were better. So...but I think water has to be a high priority for this state. And it does pain me to take the money from the Environmental Trust Fund. Those of you from rural Nebraska who say, let's just grab this money from the Environmental Trust, it's not doing any good; a lot of that money is being spent on very worthwhile projects in rural Nebraska, and a lot of it's being used by NRD issues, it's being used by irrigation district issues. Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District