

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

March 17, 2004 LB 962
 LR 209

priorities and the Environmental Trust is now giving priority to water programs, I think this will rise to a higher level than some of the other funding requests will. But those requests are far greater than the funds we have to provide money to accomplish them. And that's always been the case. We may have approximately \$8 million a year that comes in, but all of that \$8 million isn't available. Some of it has already been spent. There have been grants that have been approved that fund programs for one, two, three, and four years into the future. So the first year's funding has been provided; the second and third and perhaps fourth years' funding has been earmarked but isn't actually spent. So that reduces the total availability of funds to a lower level. We have, in essence, required, or almost required, the Environmental Trust to fund certain things. On top of that, we've pulled money out. Senator Landis' legislation, I believe it's LR 209, would take another 10 percent away. Now maybe the efficiencies would keep that amount of money from being reduced a full 10 percent. I'm hoping that that will be the case. And I'm willing to look at a compromise on what we do with that. But we continue to look to the trust as a kind of slush fund where we can fund things that we don't come up with money from any other...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR PREISTER: ...source to fund. That concerns me. And as somebody who has tried to be very careful in protecting that fund, I think we need to continue to do that. If the funds are a part of the normal grant process, as Senator Schrock is providing and Senator Beutler is agreeing to, part of the funds come from General Funds, part come from grant application, applying for the grant, then at this point I guess I'm willing to support that on General File over to Select File. Although I still have my reservations, I think Senator Bourne is right, we do need to pay attention to the budget, we do need to look at how the funding is going forward. At this point, I'm weighing all of that. I'm still reserving judgments. But I appreciate the spirit of compromise. I appreciate the work that's gone into this bill. And I think it does have important provisions that we really do need to get done. Thank you.