

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

March 31, 2004 LB 1090

make up our minds which, if any, of these we like. With respect to this particular tax, keep in mind that it is something that can be started and stopped fairly efficiently so that if, for example, we were twice blessed in some way and we didn't have a \$104 million deficit, as the Forecasting Board said, but we only had \$60 million, and if we were blessed again and somehow miraculously the low-level suit was settled for half that amount, I think that's probably the best it could be under any conditions, well, then maybe you go back next year and the utility tax, instead of for being for three years, only has to be for two years or less, so you can adjust next year downward if that is the position that you need to be in or want to be in. Secondly, keep in mind that by doing something now, whether it's this or the income tax or Senator Brashear's bill, one of the very most important things you'll be doing is protecting the progress that we've made over the last two decades on the property taxes. Some of you may have woke up this morning to read the article, was it in the World-Herald or the Journal Star, with regard to the Farm Bureau comparison of property tax rates in Nebraska to Kansas and surrounding states. The property tax rate on farmers, according to this survey, and I have no reason to believe that it's wrong because surveys consistently have been showing this over time, we tax our farmers a lot more...or our farmers pay a lot more property tax than they pay in other states. And I fuss around with these fees sometimes because I think farmers should pay fees on things that directly affect them, but the basic big thing you can do for farmers is to get those property taxes down and to keep them down and not let go of them. And if you don't do something this year, there's a grave danger that \$1.10, an increased levy, and a huge cut in state aid will have to be part of the solution next year, as it almost became a part of the solution this year. Thirdly, Senator Schimek, in response to you and your concern about the low income, as you know, that is often my concern too, and so that troubles me. It does have a paragraph in here that says the Power Review Board may make rules and regulations that totally or partially exempt low-income subscribers from the surcharge. Such rules and regulations shall limit the exemptions to a total of \$21 million over any three-year period. You could play around with that, if this were a tax that you wanted to do, but I was not in a position where I could