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FLOOR DEBATE

April 5, 2004 LB 1065

We've already used this fuel tax for about everything that we can do. We have road program that seems to be quite adequate. And whenever there's any problem or any money needed, why, everyone always looks to the fuel tax. So I think by going to the commodity that will receive the source of revenue in the end is the right way to go. So with that, I'm certainly going to support Senator Wehrbein's amendment, and I want to thank him for bringing it forward. Thank you.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Thank you, Senator Louden. Senator Baker, you're recognized to speak.

SENATOR BAKER: Thank you, Madam President, members. I'm going to rise in opposition to Senator Wehrbein's amendment, and I'll tell you why. I think we had the correct mix in LB 1065. Although not everyone was happy, that's how we arrived at it. I don't think anyone was perfectly satisfied with LB 1065, but that's what we agreed to do, and I'm sticking with it. I think we can justify it for the same reason Senator Kremer and I think several others have spoken toward. The .3 cent a gallon fuel tax is more than offset by the savings that we provide to the Nebraska motorist because we have an ethanol source in our backyard, basically, right here in the state. We don't have to have a lot of transportation costs involved with it, and we're seeing that reflected at the gas pumps. Ethanol producers, of course, I think, pretty much tie their price of ethanol to the price of no-lead gas, but...it goes up and down. But the figures I have say that in...or, I'm sorry, 2002, E10 sales in Nebraska were 325.1 million gallons. The average wholesale cost of this blended fuel for that year was 2.1 cents below unleaded gasoline. You are for change...and this goes back to a bill we had years ago dealing with mandates. But the price is being reflected...it's lower on the gas pumps now across the state. And based on these numbers, at 2.1 cents a gallon times the volume, it saved Nebraska motorists \$6.83 million in 2002. If you'll look on your green sheet, I believe it's...the .3 cent a gallon raises \$2.58 million per year. So there's almost a 2 to 1...or more than a 2 to 1 ratio there in savings. In 2003, blended sales, around 365 million gallons. That's not a firm figure, but they were up considerably, just because of the price-sensitive nature of fuel. People use more of it. The