

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

April 6, 2004

LB 1065

SENATOR COMBS: Thank you, Lieutenant Governor, members of the body. I have not spoken on LB 1065 yet. And I guess my comments are more of a philosophical nature, as to what ethanol represents for all of Nebraska. I noticed yesterday that gas prices are coming down a little bit. In Geneva it was \$1.67; in Friend it was still \$1.79. The prices for gasoline have gone up tremendously. And I think it's pretty short-sighted not to get on the ethanol bandwagon, because this is a sustainable resource that's renewable, that there is a demand for. I have to agree with Senator Stuthman yesterday. If we are going to decrease our dependence on foreign oil and not be at the mercy of OPEC, then we're going to have to start thinking outside the box. You know, this small amount that we are trying to get through for a checkoff we have both sides agreeing on. And that would be almost unheard of. But we have the corn growers who have agreed on the checkoff amount, and we also have the gasoline people who have agreed on an amount, that together will work to promote ethanol production in Nebraska. I must say that I don't like, on a federal level, being at the mercy of OPEC. And that's exactly what's happened since the winter. We have seen gasoline prices go up with absolutely no benefit to us, and we have no control over it. Wouldn't it be better to have it go up just a few tenths of a percent and have it directly benefit our corn producers in our state? We are strategically positioned to really make a big difference in this industry in the state of Nebraska. I think it's extremely short-sighted that we get all wrapped up in the insular attitude that, oh my golly, this is an increase in motor fuel tax, and we don't want that. Well, I don't want it either. But I also didn't want the one I just got jacked with since this last winter. And it has absolutely no benefit for us. It's for OPEC. So let's think a little bit broader, a little bit bigger. Let's think in terms of promoting business expansion in Nebraska. And granted, you know, we heard Senator Chambers say, well, those rural people are just whining and crying and...you know, and Senator Schrock doesn't want people piling on the corn producers. Well, maybe that's so. However, you want to let that stand in the way of doing what's right for the entire state, and for what's right for us as far as the industrialization of the western part of Nebraska, and helping us get on board for something that is