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FLOOR DEBATE

April 6, 2004            LB 1065

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN:     Thank you, Senator Wehrbein.     The next speaker will be Senator Chambers, to be followed by Senators Stuhr, Louden, Schrock, Landis, Janssen, Raikes, Hartnett, Baker, Schimek, and others.     Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS:     Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I do support Senator Wehrbein's amendment.     And that is all that I will say.     Thank you.

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN:     Thank you, Senator Chambers.     Senator Stuhr.

SENATOR STUHR:     Thank you, Mr. President and members of the body.     I do support Senator Wehrbein's amendment.     I think this is probably the closest thing to a compromise that we have seen.     The fact that I was pretty upset yesterday when the vote was pretty close to doubling the checkoff for ag producers.     Again, I think ethanol is extremely important to the state of Nebraska.     I think we're coming full circle, so to speak, because back in the days when Henry Ford first discovered the automobile, he promoted the use of ethanol and using farm products and renewable sources as a fuel.     And I think we are coming back full circle.     Ethanol is extremely important, as it provides jobs for actually thousands of people across the state of Nebraska, and also, I believe, the capital investments that are made and the tax receipts that are found.     This solution is better than the proposals that we had yesterday.     And I think, again, when we're looking at doubling, which we were looking at yesterday, the checkoff fee, I think Senator Schrock pointed out earlier that Nebraska is the only state that uses checkoff producer funds in the promotion of ethanol.     And I think that's an important factor.     Also, again, property taxes.     We, again, have...it's been stated that Nebraska is...ranks first among the eight neighboring states in property taxes.     And so, again, when you look at the whole benefit and the load that agriculture has to bear.     So I will be supporting the amendment, just hoping that we can find some compromise.     Because I think we all agree that this industry is very important for the state of Nebraska.     The LUST Funds are gas tax money.     We're using the interest.     As we said, half of the interest, half of it will go for the water