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make it harder for us to even live in those areas. We hear a lot about business incentives in this state, and I am a supporter of business incentives. We hear a lot about, we need to grow Nebraska. We need economic development, and we do have some programs, although I feel they are rather small programs, that are directed at rural economic development. But when we talk about growing Nebraska, and when we talk about economic development in this state, we don't speak to rural Nebraska. So I think the true message is, and the message I hear and the message that my constituents hear is that this state really doesn't care about rural Nebraska. When you close a school, and as I said, from the fiscal note, that is the intent of this bill, how are you going to attract families with young children to come to rural areas? Three of...our three sons are now home on the ranch. Our country school is 5.5 miles from our ranch, and from there it's another 23 miles to town. If schools close, school buildings close, I may never see grandchildren, and I would certainly hope to be able to have grandchildren on our family ranch in future years. When you close small schools, small rural schools, you have closed the engine for economic growth in that community. In many rural areas, schools are the largest employers in small communities. They are the better paying jobs in those communities, because these school districts not only pay good salaries; they also offer good benefits. So...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR FISCHER: ...what is the message we're going to be sending? Is it that if you don't live in metro areas in the state, or if you don't live along I-80, then maybe we'll throw a little tidbit out every now and then and call it rural economic development, but when it comes right down to it, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, we can shut down the engine for economic growth in your community? Thank you, Mr. President, and I promise to get back to facts next time. I'll turn the rest of my time over to you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Fischer. On with discussion. Senator Beutler, followed by Senator Chambers.