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call for Hooker County, it served as a wake-up call for Mullen, and it should be a wake-up call for the entire state. Economic development in sparsely settled Sandhills communities in Sandhills area is hard to achieve because we face many unique problems in our area of the state. Mainly, it's due to transportation costs. And when you're...as in Hooker County, when your license plate number is 93, that denotes the smallest population when that numbering system was established. Hooker County now has 783 residents. That's only one person per square mile. So we do have a number of challenges that we face in this state. I believe LB 71 helps rural Nebraska. It helps the people in rural Nebraska by offering us another opportunity in developing businesses and being able to tap into that expertise that is so desperately needed in rural areas. I believe that LB 71, with its \$1 million in appropriation, will provide those opportunities for growth in the rural parts of this state, and I would support this bill and its amendments. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Fischer. (Visitors introduced.) Senator Connealy.

SENATOR CONNEALY: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I've been in ag production all my life. I actually rented my ground out to my cousin last year, but I've been in agricultural production for a long time and I...and almost that whole time I've also been in ag promotion and trying to generate business. And if you look at what we've done in our industry over the last few years of our industry, the last 25 years of my life, we've ended up exporting about the same amount as we did in the 1970s. Through my career, we've been static. Production has increased. You know, we have had a more vibrant agricultural economy, but where has that all gone? It's gone to industrial uses. It's gone to programs that we've tried to figure out ways here in the United States to use our products more, to put more value there. It is...has been the story of my agricultural career--ethanol, industrial uses for grain, making more products out here on the land. Trying to retain some more of that value here is what it's about. It hasn't worked every time. Every idea has not been a success. But if we don't continue to try to figure out ways to build new markets, to keep more of that value here in our home state, we're going to continue to dwindle on the vine.