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SENATOR WEHRBEIN PRESIDING

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Thank you, Senator Louden. Senator Kremer.

SENATOR KREMER: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. This bill was heard in the Agriculture Committee. I did have some real reservations about it, but we are the only state that does not allow rib branding. The purpose of it was to increase the quality of hides, and it seemingly hasn't been very effective, since we're the only state that's done it and there have not been discounts or any advantages to the rib brand, as far as we can tell, as far as the packers, whether they pay more or less, if it really does bother them. But it does, I think, cut down on the value of the hides that are made into leather, if it does have a rib brand right in the middle of the hide. But it seems like they have not really followed through on that. If they would start saying we're going to discount from the price they pay, I think it would make people very quickly stop rib branding. The Nebraska Cattlemen does have a program called the Beef Quality Assurance Program, which encourages people to do things that would be in the best management and the best profitability of the beef industry. One is the location of vaccination. One is the brand on the rib. But since it's not been utilized very much, and Senator Louden did ask if he could attach this on here, it is...fits very well because it both has to do with the Brand Committee and they do need more funds. I think they did say it would bring in \$15,000 a year. I question that because the brand registration costs \$15, so it would be 1,000 new registrations a year. I don't think it would ever be that much, but any amount does help. I think if it ever got to the place where they would discount for having rib brands, then people would stop using it, and those that participate in the Beef Quality Assurance Program do voluntarily use practices that would be...that would be profitable. So if they're in that program, they're probably not going to use rib branding anyway. Another thing also, those that have been using rib brands are grandfathered in, so many of them keep those brands up, or most of them, for year, after year, after year, so they're still using it, so I don't think it's been very effective. So I will even reluctantly support Senator Louden's amendment. Thank you.