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determine and identify public policy: what constitutes the right spending, what constitutes the right economic development for our state--not just for certain segments, not for rural areas or for enterprise zones, or for municipalities or counties--what's right for the state of Nebraska. And between now and next year, that's going to be a priority for me, to determine what kind of economic development programs are there, and what's the best direction for the state. And then we have full discussion, rather than bits and pieces. I do support the amendment. I support the bill, principally because it's a new idea, because it engages local governments, local entities, and forces them to participate, whether it's in-kind or with direct funding, participate in the process rather than taking the money and spending it with no obligation, no outcome demanded from them. So with that, Mr. President, thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Mines. Senator Stuhr, on AM0845.

SENATOR STUHR: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the body. I do come before you in support of the bill and also the amendment. Before this session, the Rural Development Committee (sic) selected some of the priorities that they really wanted to work on this year, and this was one of those bills that we selected. Since the commission has been formed, there's been an ongoing dialogue about the future of rural Nebraska and the communities in rural Nebraska and what might be done to be able to assist these communities to grow and to prosper. Much discussion has occurred about the out-migration of the best and the brightest of our state and how we might find ways to keep these young adults and young families in our communities. We in the rural community and also in other communities are struggling to find ways to help our economic depressed areas. And I'm not only talking about the rural areas but also, as Senator Synowiecki has pointed out, there are a couple areas in the Omaha area. Just a couple statistics: Between 1980 and 1990, all but 10 of Nebraska's 93 counties lost population, and that was primarily when the farm crisis occurred. A study was done in April of 2003 by the Opportunity for Postsecondary Education and found that Nebraska ranks 40th nationally in keeping its college graduates. A study done by the University of Nebraska