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FLOOR DEBATE

March 30, 2005 LB 273

FA118 to LB 273. Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, I have a series of amendments, all of which are designed to try to define what it is we're talking about here. I do, notwithstanding what's been indicated, have a problem with the focus thing, and I think it's worthy of considerable discussion to try to ascertain exactly what it is we think we might be able to get done with this bill. Let me back up and say, myself, like all of us in here I think, whether we come from urban areas or rural areas, but certainly more so those who have come from rural areas, have struggled with the decline of the rural areas, have struggled with what we can practically do about it, have struggled with the different notions over time, many of which have failed, most of which have failed in the 20 years that I've been here. And I think each of us believes, whether we are talking about economic development that might pertain primarily to an urban area or to a rural area, that we want that which we do to be effective and not wasted money. I have supported, in the past, economic development efforts for rural areas that I think are effective. In fact, I've gone out on a limb on some. Senator Schmit and I were supporting ethanol plants back in the early 1980s, before most of the rural senators were on board with ethanol plants. But that was something specific. It was something focused. It's time has come now and everybody recognizes it. We have a lot of ethanol plants. We can have more. They may not even need assistance any longer, the way the economic factors have switched in recent times. I have also voted against some economic development measures that were supposed to help my own city. Things, like the Cornhusker Hotel, were built with economic incentives that I, in fact, voted against. So I hope that the series of inquiries and the series of remarks that I make on this bill are not perceived as being anti-rural, because in my heart they are not. But here is what I perceive to be the problem in terms of how we assist the rural areas. There are some parts of rural Nebraska that we can't fix, and I think that we cannot fix them because those huge economic forces that have led to the overall decline in our rural areas over the last few decades, those forces are not being changed, are not changing, continue to roll out and to play out. The rural agricultural technologies continue to