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FLOOR DEBATE

April 11, 2005 LB 161, 302

city trees. This provision dates back to 1919, but it has long been believed that the city needed state authority to enact this provision in its charter. LB 302, and this amendment, simply gives cities the authority to provide an exclusive funding source for trees through a special assessment. Any details of this assessment would be worked out at the city council level. The cost for local improvements to establish and maintain public trees do provide tangible benefits to abutting property owners that are assessed. In general, a neighborhood full of trees is going to be more valuable than a barren neighborhood. An assessment based on street frontage would...makes costs for local improvements more predictable than a property tax levy that can fluctuate uncontrollably from year to year. Assessment districts would provide consistent and dedicated municipal funding, used exclusively for the proactive management of Lincoln's public tree infrastructure for the welfare, safety, and benefit of its citizens and its public. Trees are a unique component of a city's infrastructure. And with proper maintenance, they appreciate in value and benefits over time, instead of depreciating. That ends my explanation of my amendment. And I would like to defer to Senator Beutler. He will explain the procedure for written protest of citizens, based on work with the committee counsel, the city attorney, the city of Lincoln attorney, and himself. And I would like to give the remainder of my time to Senator Beutler. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Beutler, about 7, 10.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Price, thank you. Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, at Senator Price's direction, I took a look at the legal details of these petition processes. And using some very good information supplied by committee counsel for the Urban Affairs Committee, working together with the county attorney...or, the city attorney of the city of Lincoln, so that everything melded together with Lincoln's city charter and the recognized procedures within the city, we worked out a petition process whereby people could object to the formation of the district. Or, on the other hand, they could petition for the formation of a district. All of this is being done because we perceived, on the last round of debate, that what you all wanted to see was some sort of petition process in place. So