

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office  
FLOOR DEBATE

May 18, 2005

LB 90, 312, 500

called. Senator Chambers, you are recognized to close on your bracket motion.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. Cabela's is the reason for this bill. There's no question about it. I had mentioned an article in yesterday's Journal Star. It pointed out that Cabela's is a publicly traded company, and one of their top men acknowledged that they could not build these stores in the way they are doing without public financing. There are other stores which could not compete with them without public financing, but they're not going to get it. Cabela's is the one trying to get it. Senator Louden had suggested how these locales, where this monstrosity will locate, could find a way to come up with the money, if they chose to do so. But instead, the state's treasury is to be plundered. That has already happened with LB 312, and the accompanying LB 90. There's a point beyond which the taxpayers' money should not be spent inappropriately. Reading from that article yesterday, one reason Cabela's is able to sustain the rapid growth of the megastores--that sounds something like they're talking about Wal-Mart--which are then pitched as tourist attractions, is the public financing the company receives. It's a situation that galls competitor Poet, a person in Michigan who is all but annihilated by Cabela, and that Callahan recognizes as a key to the company's business strategy. Quote from Callahan: We probably would not be building the size of stores we are, with the amenities we have, if it were not for the public financing, and if we lost the amenities, we might lose that draw as a tourist attraction. I don't blame these greedy business operations for exploiting these legislators who are so easily persuaded or bludgeoned into succumbing to the siren song of these greedy commercial operations. Will you give Wal-Mart some money, if they would agree to build in their parking lot a large fountain that would have different-colored lights on it, would make people come and look at it, and that's a tourist attraction? Will you give Wal-Mart some money? Why only one retail establishment? It's clear, because they have the strongest lobbyist--well, that might offend others--in the state pushing it. That's why it has come as far as it has, that's why it has taken the time it has taken, and being given the time it is being given. I'd like to ask Senator Engel a question,