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FLOOR DEBATE

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per diem. Right now, they may be paid \$70 per day when they are working on NRD activities, or related activities, and they can be paid for up to 40 days. It increases the amount they can collect annually on per diem from \$2,800 per year to \$3,600 per year. And...but the amount of money they can receive per day remains the same, at \$70. I will tell you that not all NRD board members pay \$70 a day. Some of them pay less. But this was brought to us by the Association of Natural Resource Districts. With the increased activities that the NRD boards have, which would include, obviously, water-related activities, they're...some of them are exceeding the 40 days. And so this would increase it to 50 days, from \$2,800 to \$3,600. I think it's a reasonable, straightforward request, either you disagree with it or agree with it, and I would ask you for your considerations. I would also say that Senator Beutler has some amendments pending, and I think it will result in some good discussion. And because of anticipation of that discussion, I am having the pages pass out some information. And we've come a long ways in this state when it comes to water activities. It's not been painless. It's been painful. And farmers have the attitude that the water under the ground is theirs, but it does belong to the state. And of course, they're entitled to that beneficial use when there is enough quantity. The Republican River Basin has been especially troublesome for not only the state, but for those of us who serve that area. But I would also tell you, we've had the perfect storm in the Republican River Basin. We agreed to abide by the compact. We didn't agree to anything new or anything different. We just agreed to abide by the compact that was signed in 1943. The reason for the compact was because without the compact they would not have built the reservoirs in southwest Nebraska. And of course, the reservoirs are for flood control, and that's almost...(laugh) that's almost laughable now, because lack of water is the big problem in the Republican River Basin. So I have some handouts for you. It kind of shows you what we've been up against. Not everybody has embraced LB 962, which I think was a good piece of legislation. That was discussed two years ago on the floor. I appreciate those of you who were here at that time and helped me advance that. And so I am going to wait until the amendments have surfaced, let Senator Beutler have a chance to explain them, and then we'll move forward. But take a look at what I've