

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

February 1, 2006 LB 975

out there at a particular point in time, but I wanted to...we will be discussing again an irrigation conservation fee, and I think that this is an example of where a fee has been paid and is being paid by agriculture to help pay a part of the regulatory costs. Now, the regulatory costs in the area of water are going to be much, much higher than the regulatory costs here, but I think, in accordance with the philosophy that we've adopted almost across the board, at least a part of the regulatory costs are paid by the people being regulated. And it's kind of interesting to compare irrigators to cattlemen. I mean, in one sense the cattlemen have no federal subsidies, and they're paying a fee. The irrigators have huge federal subsidies and they're still refusing to pay any sort of...make any sort of contribution towards the regulatory costs. Another comparison might be with respect to the cattlemen. For the fee that they pay, they get nothing but a handful of regulation. With respect to the irrigators, they're getting free water from the taxpayers of the state of Nebraska, which is their most important production input, next, perhaps, to the seed of corn itself. And yet, notwithstanding getting that very, very valuable input, they are not willing to pay any fee, as the cattlemen are paying. Thirdly, that water to irrigators is particularly valuable because it allows them to produce a good per-acre yield in years when the rest of the country may be in a drought and not able to produce much corn, and they benefit then from a price advantage or from a production advantage that goes with that particular set of circumstances. All of these things, I think, should be taken into consideration.

SENATOR CUDABACK PRESIDING

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR BEUTLER: And what I'm...what I'm arguing for with this analogy would be an irrigation conservation fee that applied to all irrigators, because all irrigators everywhere in the state are subject to regulation. They're a part of the regulatory system. So, in accordance with the philosophy we've followed almost across the board, they should be helping out with a part of the cost of regulation. Now I want to talk a little bit more about doing it differently, if you wanted to, but one way or