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FLOOR DEBATE

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And this is a spending amendment before us, to the tune of \$24.6 million. And when you say that we're not talking about property tax relief of any kind in the committee amendment, that's not accurate, because we have in fact tried to begin the process of addressing the high property tax burden on agricultural land in this state. The committee amendment drops it from 80 percent to 75 percent for taxable valuation. Is it enough? Well, we'd like to do more. But it is something, and there is no guarantee in Senator Louden's amendment that there will be any. That's because the amendment is a spending amendment. It doesn't say that they will have to lower the levy. It only says they'll get the money. And our experience in this state is that as we have tried to put pressure on local governments to reduce property taxes and we have poured more money in at the state level, we have not seen dollar-for-dollar tax relief at the property level. We've seen a trend line go down, we've slowed the increase, but we have not seen dollar-for-dollar tax relief for our citizens. Senator Louden should be commended by...for looking at everything he can to reduce the property tax burden, but I don't believe this is it. I think that ag land valuation is where we need to begin. Clearly, our farmers cannot move, they cannot take their land, they cannot find relief in any other way. And I think it's a good place for us to start. It would be great if we could do it across the board for all property tax owners, but we wanted to make sure that we could at least focus where we thought it was most desperately needed. So I would ask you not to support Senator Louden's amendment. Thank you.

SENATOR BAKER: Thank you, Senator Redfield. Senator Bourne.

SENATOR BOURNE: Thank you, Mr. President, members. I'm not going to support Senator Louden's amendment, not because I don't believe we should do property tax relief, but because I am convinced that there is a fundamental flaw in the formula for our community colleges. Several years ago, about five years ago, I was on the Revenue Committee, actually with Senator Baker, and we were struggling with this very issue, the disparity, the inaccuracies, the problems with the funding formula. We talked about it, I believe it was on a Senator Baker bill. At the time, we had talked about getting the