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FLOOR DEBATE

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Senator Landis, followed by Senator Wehrbein and others.

SENATOR LANDIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature. I rise to endorse the Brown amendment. The fact that it's going to last only two more years I think is good, in that this has not been a high priority for the economic development department. They've had bigger fish to fry, not that it's been a bad idea. The original one was a bill that I passed, and the underlying bill that's being adopted here is one of mine, as well. On the other hand, in the crush of last year I'd have to say that this did not rise to the top, and apparently, we're going back and doing this piece of work, which is entirely acceptable to me. It is the underlying bill, by the way, that I rise to make one speech, I'll sit down, and I'll leave it alone. LB 990 amends the small tier in our economic incentive packages to allow for some agricultural and essentially livestock operations to receive a tax incentive. You use a tax incentive to encourage behavior for which there's a great deal of competition elsewhere, and for which you need assistance in the tax code to make it work. We do not need to incent livestock operations in the state of Nebraska with a tax incentive. This is a place where it's sensible to do it. We have the land and the water and the resources. To the extent that this is not the leader that it once was, it's because there is a tenor out among our towns that these operations have a high social cost, and what was once open arms and a sense of welcome has dried up around the state in various places. A tax incentive is not going to overcome that. It seems to me that this is a place where we do not need to alter the marketplace, because we have the very resources that should make this an appropriate location, and to the extent that there is a problem out there, it's not the tax code. It's in environmental regulations or the unwillingness of small-town Nebraskans to share their air, water, and current quality of life with livestock operations, and those have created hurdles and obstacles, no doubt about it. Those hurdles and obstacles will not go away by LB 990. All we're going to do is essentially give a tax incentive for something that would have happened anyway, from my estimation, and that in fact, if the goal of this bill was to encourage livestock operations expanding, we would do more to try to create a system of relationships in our