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FLOOR DEBATE

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it on property tax, where everyone has to help them get out of the problem that they've...board members have probably created in many instances by allowing too many wells to be drilled? They could see the handwriting on the wall several years ago. Most of those people had been in those areas for two or three generations so when anyone tells me they didn't...couldn't see it coming, they should have known. They knew where their water table was years ago. So are you going to put it on a property tax that everybody in the towns, everyone does, or are you going to look at more like a user fee type and those that are using the water will be the ones to help bail out your NRDs that are in trouble? Senator Baker vouched for some of the NRDs, that they would use the money quite prudently, but I would ask...my understanding is the Lower Republican down there put out a very substantial sum of money for a lobbyist, and the question is, did that help their water situation any? So once that money goes to the NRDs, that's a board, they can do as they please with it. They always have, they always will, and there isn't any strings attached that what they were supposed to do once they get above their mill levy, that I can understand. I would suggest that we do not put the tax burden on the property in all those areas. As you look on that map there you'll notice there's a lot of rangeland in there that probably doesn't have any ground water pumping done for it for irrigation at all. There's a lot of small grain operators in the North Platte area that, wheat and small grains, that have never been into irrigation, but yet their machinery, their property and whatever they have will be taxed the same as those that are doing the pumping. Those in the North Platte NRD, there's a lot of surface water irrigation there, has been since the turn of the century or before. Those people will be taxed the same on their property, machinery, whatever they have that they use to grow crops with. So I think that it's a good idea that we need to have some different funding to help some of these NRDs get out of the...some of the jam they're in, but I think by putting it on the property tax is the wrong way to go at it. I think there's other ways that it can be done quite well. Perhaps there should be some strings attached whether or not they're going to hire lobby groups, whatever they're going to do with that money. Is the money going to be used for flow meters to put on their wells? Some of the NRDs down there already have