

1 1/2 cents that they have not fully implemented. If that were implemented as a part of the state's sales tax base, it would currently raise almost \$183 million. The utilization by the cities is much lower than that on the current usage. It is about \$56 million less. The program costs us \$56 million. You will see those numbers in the handout that accompanied the amendment. The handout also illustrates what the other effect of my amendment is, and that is not an elimination of the 1 1/2 cents, but a full implementation of the 1 1/2 cents across the state sales tax base, and then a distribution of that 1 1/2 cents to all of the municipalities in the State of Nebraska on a per capita basis, the same way we already distribute some aid to them. This is simply a means of enhancing aid to them and providing, hopefully, property tax relief, not just property tax relief in those communities who have exercised the local option, but property tax relief in all the communities across the State of Nebraska, and property tax relief for most of them in rather significant amounts. And those are the numbers that you'll also see in the handout. What you have is a listing of the communities that currently have exercised in whole or in part their option to have a city sales tax, and the resulting changes that my amendment would cause in the revenues that they generate from 1 1/2 cents of sales tax. There are a few losers, and I am sure you'll be able to see those, those are the ones in the brackets, but there are also some very large gainers, and, in fact, those communities that have not exercised the local option at all to this point would gain \$48.8 million. We would, in fact, be providing \$48.8 million worth of property tax relief to communities that have none now, except for the little bit that we distribute to them through other aid programs. We would give \$48.8 million in property tax relief simply, simply by making efficient a tax program that we are already running, a tax program that costs us \$56 million out of the state's tax base. What Senator Ashford really wants to do is increase that cost, and I cannot support Senator Ashford's efforts. I think my opposition is well known. I did bring the amendment to focus us on this issue. I see Senator Ashford has his light on. I don't know if he wants to talk about this amendment or not. I hope that others do because I think we need to realize what this tax policy is costing us.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. The item before us now is the Wickersham amendment to the Ashford amendment. Let me go through the list of speakers to see who will be speaking to the Wickersham amendment, and then we will come up