

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Madam President, and members, this is my close to, probably close to my swan song, but this represents for me a moment that at least I've been working for for probably six out of the eight years that I have been here, and that's my absolute firm belief that Omaha, the largest city in the state, has a great deal to offer to the state as a whole. And what was telling to me about what the citizens of my city did last year, in a tough, tough vote to vote to increase a sales tax by half a percent, they expressed a willingness to do what needs to be done. They expressed a willingness to correct a problem that is quite obvious to any of us who have been in or around the Omaha Civic Auditorium. But I think they were saying something else and I think they were saying something that a lot of us have alluded to here today and that is that Omaha is no longer just a small city. It doesn't really have that ability anymore to kind of hide behind the kind of sleepy malaise of a midwestern city that can kind of waltz through time and once in a while do a few things to make...make it...make it look a little better. And we are at a point in Omaha, Nebraska where we have to become great. We have to fill the shoes of a great city. And it's not going to happen all at once and it may not happen and probably won't happen in my generation or Senator Hali's generation or Senator...but it probably, hopefully, will come in my son's generation and my daughter's generation. But we need to kick-start the process. We need to bring Omaha up to speed. We need to help the citizens of Omaha do what they decided that they wanted to do for themselves. And I would suggest to you that they wanted to do not only for themselves but for all the citizens of this state, because whether you think it or not, whether you think it or not, people in Omaha are very proud to be part of Nebraska. They're very proud that they are the largest city in the State of Nebraska. They're extremely proud of Chimney Rock and they're extremely proud of Fort Robinson, and they're, of course, obviously proud of the University of Nebraska and the football team and everything that's been accomplished here in Lincoln for the State of Nebraska. They're immensely proud of that. They're immensely...may I have a gavel, please, I mean, if this is going to be it, at least I want a gavel. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT ROBAK: (Gavel.)

SENATOR ASHFORD: They are immensely...I love those Senator Lynch laughs from the back. But I'm very, very serious about this. I've grown up in Omaha. I've just, during the eight