

CLERK: 227 offered by Senator Wiitala. (Read title.) The bill was read on January 13, referred to Education, advanced to General File. I have no amendments, Mr. President.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Wiitala.

SENATOR WIITALA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker and members, LB 227 relates to teachers who are employed by the Nebraska School for the Deaf and the Nebraska School for the Visually Handicapped. They have a problem of salary. In investigating their salaries as compared to surrounding school systems, if you are a teacher of the deaf or the visually handicapped, whether you are a first year teacher or whether you have taught for fifteen years, there is a salary differential of \$1500 to \$5000 difference among teachers in the public school system and teachers who are teaching in the Nebraska School for the Deaf or the Visually Handicapped. Now if this wasn't so bad, it is really compounded by the fact that to teach the deaf or the visually handicapped you must have a dual degree, a degree in education and a second degree in teaching the handicapped. Not only that, but in order to teach, although you are permitted to teach with a Bachelor's Degree you must be working on a Master's Degree. So what I am saying is that over the years these teachers which amount to fifty-two teachers, fifteen teaching in Nebraska City, thirty-seven teaching in Omaha, have fallen behind dramatically as far as their pay. Once again, to compound it even further, what are their alternatives? The alternative is to leave their specialty area of teaching the handicapped and just go into education. If you are an elementary teacher teaching the handicapped you just leave and find an elementary school. By doing so, and several teachers have done this already, in Nebraska City they have a vacancy of two teachers who have left and gone into straight teacher of education rather than dealing with handicapped children in order to earn a livable salary. What it does to Nebraskans is, these teachers, is first of all, we find ourselves shorthanded in teaching the handicapped children. Secondly, they are forced to go out of state to practice in their specialty and, thirdly, they are forced, if they don't seek those alternatives, to just give up their career in teaching the handicapped and just go into just teaching children. Basically the bill asks this one thing, that their salaries be considered in this respect, that they be compared to surrounding school districts and also the bill provides, and I'm sure the schools already consider this, the State Department of Education already considers it, is their experience