

March 22, 1984

LB 994

amount of work that has gone into LB 994 over the last nine months. Now as we know and has already been said on this floor, already fewer high school graduates are entering teaching careers. Academically talented students to a lesser and lesser extent in our society are choosing teaching as a career because they know that so much more money can be made in the other professions, in medicine and law and accounting and all the innumerable other things people can get involved in. Now simply raising standards which we do in 994 is not enough. If we do not find a way to reward teachers with financial incentives, indeed go back to where we were ten years ago in real dollar terms, the best high school graduates are going to continue to choose careers in the private sector where starting salaries for college graduates are 30 to 50 percent, 30 to 50 percent above those salaries paid to classroom teachers. Now without these financial incentives provided in the stipend section, even if we can't fund it this year, why more and more of those currently in the classroom are simply going to leave for more lucrative careers elsewhere. Now national studies for instance indicate that one out of every two teachers who enters teaching this year will leave teaching in seven years for the private sector and if this Legislature does not address the issue of salaries, why then we will be dooming the teaching profession in Nebraska by forcing our best talent into alternative careers and the real solution to teacher quality lies in finding ways to make the teaching profession more attractive to the best students we have in this state. Because what we need to do obviously is attract the best and the brightest into the teaching profession and then keep them there. Now both Nebraska's starting teaching salaries, as Senator Scofield and others have indicated, and career salaries fall far below the national average. During the school year '82-83 Nebraska tied with Georgia and ranked 42nd in the nation. Our starting salaries in Nebraska are more than \$3,000 below the national average and I maintain that this is not a distinction to be proud of. Now we're not alone in attempting to address the salary issue. Nearly every state has set up commissions and task forces on excellence and the like and all of them have identified increasing teachers salaries as an absolute imperative if we are to enhance the

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