

SPEAKER NICHOL: Why don't you say something.

SENATOR HARRIS: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I just want to clarify a little bit again according to my experience with the Retirement Systems Committee. There have been a lot of statements made and a lot of insinuations made about what effect there is going to be upon the system. Senator Johnson has spoken to the huge cost. Senator Wesely has spoken to that issue. And as Senator Lamb said, another voice heard on this particular issue, usually not in concert. But the thing you have to decide for yourselves, and I support the Wesely amendment as amended, and I view it as a compromise. I think the issue has to be handled, it has to be dealt with. You have to look within yourself to decide the degree of impact that this is going to have upon the future expenditures for the local school boards, and then again how it is going to impact the other retirement systems for the state. Certainly they are going to be looking at this for themselves. But the thing that you have to look within yourself to answer before you vote on this amendment is are we going to be able to better, in this case, the system of education in the State of Nebraska. Now we hear that in regards to the salary. I want to point out this particular point I made earlier, about when teachers decide to retire, when people in professions decide to retire, teaching is a profession, they reach that crucial period of time, the 12th to the 15th year, and they make that lifetime decision for themselves. I submit, and this is just my feeling, I submit that it may be costly. I will also submit, on the other side, that in the long run it may save the system money, depending upon what those people do. And the people that are standing here saying it is going to cost X numbers of dollars are simply looking into a crystal ball that is still cloudy and saying that they see something in that crystal ball. There is no guarantee of the teachers doing one thing or another. They may opt to stay within the system because they have an additional option. They may opt out of the system and take advantage of early retirement. We don't know whether we are going to keep the good teachers for sure, if that is the issue that you are worried about, we don't know exactly what is going to happen. It is an impossible thing to address in statistical terms. That is why I am sticking with the concept. The concept is very simple. If you give an option to the teachers, public employees, that allows for a benefit in the future at some point in their career that is not a negative thing, it is a