

SENATOR SCHMIT: It should not be the prerogative of the general public, it ought to be the job of the elected representatives of this State of Nebraska who sit in this Legislature, the 49 of us. If the 49 of us can't agree, how do you expect the Revenue Department to agree, how do you expect the general public to agree? Ladies and gentlemen, the Vickers amendment is an attempt to clarify the issue. It may need further clarification. Senator Lamb has told you right when he talks about the partial districts and that is a problem. But the issue is not going to be resolved by tiptoeing around it. Someone needs to speak up for the rural residents who are paying now four and five times what some other people are paying, either rural or urban. I suppose I have a conflict of interest, and I suppose I maybe should declare that. But I'm telling you here and now there are thousands of other farmers and ranchers out there in the same position that I am in and they are tired of the situation as it exists now also.

PRESIDENT: Senator Rod Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. President, members, I have tried to refrain from the debate today because I wanted to hear the arguments presented by both sides. As you know I did vote against the advancement of the bill last time. I probably plan on doing the same today. We've listened to a lot of debate, especially on this issue. We've yet to hear that there is a guarantee there that those Class I schools, if they are merged with other districts, will stay open. I know of a district in this state...in my district as an example, three small towns went together. Senator Nelson, you are aware of this issue. They went together, they built a junior-senior high in the country and they passed a petition that said the small schools will continue to remain open in those small towns. Unfortunately through the years those small K thru 6 school sites have been run down. Unfortunately they seem to have been forgotten about. Finally the school board decided it was time to consolidate all the schools, close down those small schools in those little towns and bring all the kids to one site. The people, of course, in those communities decided they didn't want to lose those schools, so they sued their own school board. It took a lot of money, took a lot of time, and unfortunately that suit lost. They lost their suit. They have since defeated two bond issues, which the school board has decided that they still want to consolidate that