

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I am going to be brief so that others can speak. I want to make only two points about LB 662, two points that I think are very important for every thoughtful legislator to keep in mind in making his or her decision as to how to vote. The first point that I want to make as artfully as I can make is this. LB 662 is a go-slow bill. It is not a hurry-up measure. It is a go-slow bill. Let me tell you what I mean by that. LB 662 does not go into full force and effect until July, 1986. The study part of LB 662 does go into effect 90 days after the end of this legislative session. Thus we will literally have nine months to examine and reexamine the school consolidation and finance question. Then when LB 662 goes into full force and effect on July, 1986, there are three years still remaining for school districts to be able to work out their own consolidation methodology. They can work it out, and only after they can't come to mutual understandings and agreements will the heavy hand of state force be applied, but in the meantime, the extent to which subsequent legislatures and legislators find some problems or difficulties with the consolidation approach, the affiliation approach, the entire process, they may make adjustments. We are not cramming something down overnight on any person so that is point A. This is a go-slow bill and it is so important for people to recognize that. This is not a bill that says in 1986 all schools must consolidate and merge. It is a very careful, thoughtful bill. The second point that I want to emphasize, the bill has done everything that the drafters believed constitutionally possible to preserve for the Class I school district the autonomy that the people enjoy including placement in the bill of voting rights language which holds that before any local school can be closed the people in that affected district must vote on the closing. Our Attorney General has given us two opinions without citation of one case, without citation of one authority that that provision is constitutionally suspect. The bill provides for declaratory judgment action to test out that feature. We ought to know, we ought to know the bona fides of that feature and that is in the bill. But that second point that I want to make is that the bill does everything within its power to protect local authority and autonomy. It is both go-slow and it is protective of local interests. But by the same token the bill carries with it sort of that awesome force of a glacier that slowly moves down the slopes of a mountain, five miles a year its face goes forward, and that