

is a good system. I am going to give you a countervailing argument, one that I believe in very deeply. Experience is virtually everything in life. Experience, I would prefer to have my young children in the hands of an older teacher who has been through lots of young children, who knows the ropes, than in the hands of the young teacher who is untried and untested and just beginning, and I am prepared to pay the price for that experience and so, too, should this Legislature. I have been doing a study of what is happening in our school districts and I can tell you, my friends, that some very bad things are happening in some very small school districts in our state and most of our school districts are small school districts, and I can tell you that our students in high school are testing across the board more poorly in the small school districts than in the larger school districts, and I can tell you that the teachers in the small school districts are younger and, more importantly, less experienced than the teachers in the larger districts. An early retirement bill in the last analysis will cause both the good teacher as well as the burnt out teacher to make decisions to retire and that experience that has built up over the years will be lost, and as it is lost, our children in the end will be the losers. If, in fact, it is an important management tool to allow early retirement, there is a totally different way of writing an early retirement provision.

SPEAKER NICHOL: One minute.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: One simply gives school boards the ability to set aside monies so they may on a selected basis buy early retirement annuities for teachers they, in effect, are buying out of the tenure track. That then allows a school board to make a decision that a given teacher may be burnt out and weary and tired, and as an incentive to encourage the departure of that teacher from the school system, that teacher's tenure rights will be bought out and it will be bought out by virtue of funding an annuity package. That system is in place in other states but an across-the-board early retirement law allows the good to escape, which we don't want to have, as well as the bad to choose to opt out but it doesn't assure...incidentally, it doesn't assure that the bad will leave. This amendment costs the taxpayers money and in the end it is counterproductive to our children because it lessens the level of experience in our school systems, and we all know