

SENATOR MOREHEAD: Mr. President and members of the body, I don't know if this is a difficult issue for anyone except me but it is difficult because the people in my district are saying, no more property tax, no more property tax, and a vote for the advancement of this bill giving these community colleges an additional levying ability translates to property tax ability. Like Senator Vickers just said, I don't think we in this body are ready at this time to take over the total funding of the community college system, but in line with what Senator Abboud has said, it is a part of the postsecondary education in this state, and if we ever hope to coordinate it, I think we possibly had better be thinking in that line or in those directions. Now I know the argument is that it is locally governed, locally controlled in response to local needs as they apply to training and other demands at that time, but I watched last year our local school district adopt a \$7 million budget and there was not one person from the public there. I tell you that we have more people in the balconies of this Chamber watching what we do than the local school districts or the local technical community colleges have observing their board meetings. So you can vote for a property tax increase or ability here and say that the local board in response to the local constituents will be guarding that, but I don't know how fully aware those local people are all of the time, and that does distress me. Now I have two community colleges in my district and I think they both do an excellent job. I can say that they are under...Southeast Community College is under their property taxing levy right now. If I grant my vote to this issue, I would certainly, certainly hope that they would be very responsive to the constraints that we, as a state, are having in not using or abusing this levying ability to proliferate their courses or offerings without justification. This is a very serious vote as far as I am concerned because it is the increase of a property taxing levy and I know the land valuations have gone down. I know all of this but we are forced to cut at the state level. The federal government is forcing us to cut along with our own revenues, and I would hope that the community college system will not go on business as usual with this increased ability which appears to be going to be granted and not make some attempt on their part to use the restraints that the federal and the state governments are also having to use, and that we are imposing upon our state colleges and state universities by their budget. They have no way to draw on property taxes. So I hope you consider