

SENATOR VICKERS: Mr. President, members, I rise to oppose the motion. I want to remind you that a lot of those dollars that are in state aid to education are there because over the last several years I offered amendments and convinced many of you to put those dollars there. I want to remind you that those dollars did not necessarily equate to higher quality education across the state. I want to remind you that this Legislature did pass a bill, a few years ago, to bring about some higher quality standards in terms of education in the State of Nebraska, LB 994. And, I also want to remind you that we haven't funded it yet, we haven't funded it yet. And, guess where those dollars come from to fund it. They come from the state level. They don't come from the property taxes, Senator Wesely or Senator Withem, they come from the state level and we never funded it. So, if we are so worried about quality education, why didn't we fund 994? We didn't fund it because we didn't have the money. We faced those tough decisions, and we said we don't have the funds, we can't find the funds to fund everything, so we are not going to fund that. We didn't fund a number of other things. We've been in these kinds of sessions before. We've been having...forced to make tough decisions because we didn't want to raise the tax rates. What do you think local school boards are there for? What do you think local school boards are there for? Are they there to just pass it right on through? No, not necessarily. I don't think that \$3.8 million next year is necessarily going to be equated to \$3.8 million in increases in local property taxes. If it is, then I suggest you it damn well ain't our fault, it is the fault of some of those folks at the local level because they couldn't bite the tough bullet just like we are having to bite it. Why should we, as I said this morning, start the process of decimating state government, cutting the budget when you've got half of the budget is returned back to the property taxes and it is sacrosanct and you can't touch it? It is just as ridiculous as saying that at the federal level we're going to cut the federal expenditures, but we're not going to cut defense spending. I'm becoming convinced that property tax relief is almost as sacrosanct in the Nebraska Legislature as defense spending is in the Congress. Well, it ought not be, it ought not be, ladies and gentlemen. I could easily stand up here and say I've always been for state aid, so this last one more time I'll be for it again. But you are not going to be able to reduce the budget at this level if you don't look at the other half. You are not going to force efficiencies and economies at the other level if you don't make the shoe pinch a little bit. This is one way to do it. So I oppose the amendment.