

school districts that we're tying their hands on certain particulars is inappropriate.

SENATOR CARSTEN: Thank you. Senator Abboud, please, on the Higgins amendment.

SENATOR ABOUD: Mr. President and colleagues, I am going to rise to support Senator Higgins' amendment. I think what the amendment deals with is a frustration that we as a Legislature, as much as we try, cannot reduce property taxes by reducing spending at the state level. No matter how much we encourage local subdivisions to reduce their amount of spending and follow suit, or follow our lead in reducing their budgets, they have failed to do that. At a time when we are trying to hold back salary increases, I believe last year it was 3 percent. Years in the past we just have not given the kind of salary increases that probably our state employees were entitled to, but because of the budget constraints we weren't able to do that. It was hoped, at least it was hoped by myself and other members of this body, that local subdivisions wouldn't give the big increases, big salary increases, 7, 8, 9 percent, to their employees. Well, they have failed to do that. I don't know how we can go about reducing their amount of expenditures. It is difficult. This appears to be one option. I realize that there is a lot of administrative cost, a lot of duplication with local subdivisions, schools, that goes on and I don't know how else we can deal with the problem. You know, we've been going through some tough economic times and the tough economic times that have been faced by those in the Omaha Public School District, the Millard, Ralston, Papillion, throughout the state, throughout the Omaha metropolitan area, but we haven't seen the translation or reduced budgets. Instead of making the difficult decisions like we're making here in the Unicameral, they have chose to raise taxes, but I guess that is human nature. We see it back at the federal level, that Congress instead of raising taxes or reducing spending to deal with their problems, I should say reducing spending to deal with their problems, not raising taxes, they choose to do neither and just increase their budget or increase their deficit. We're making tough political decisions here. We're not making everybody happy, but at least we're realistic about the situation. I think Senator Higgins is at least trying to deal with the problem. I think we should all support her efforts much the same as last year when we had a bill before this body that said we realize you are increasing the valuations of your property, but at the same time we want you to reduce your levy. So instead of having a windfall amount