

SENATOR CARSTEN: Senator Vickers, on your amendment to LB 1.

SENATOR VICKERS: Well, Mr. President and members, the amendment that I offer to you now is not an amendment to restore more funds in our budget. Instead it is an amendment to do just the opposite. And I debated a long time about offering this amendment but seeing a lot of needed or a lot of programs that a lot of good arguments could be made for for the need has convinced me that maybe I had ought to point out to you that there could be some dollars freed up, perhaps, and still promote the services or promote the purposes that I think government is all about. Now, let me tell you that I will leave this Legislature after spending 8 years here being on the Education Committee, being as the Chairman of that committee, and becoming somewhat frustrated at times because we have attempted in many instances to promote quality and to make the education of our young people and our future citizens be an even better education, recognizing that the need for that better education is going to be even greater into the future. But I think we have failed to do that in many respects. We have failed to set in place some mechanisms to do it, and I want to visit with you a little bit about that. This amendment will cut state aid to education another \$2.3 million. Now that might seem like a rather strange way to promote quality but it does, I think, give this Legislature some more flexibility, perhaps, if they so choose to use it, to perhaps keep dollars in some other areas, higher education or, perhaps, human service areas that may be essential to this state. If this amendment is adopted, then I have got another amendment that I will be offering you on LB 2 that would change the state aid formula. In Nebraska, we have two standards in terms of our public schools. We have a standard of approval and a standard of accreditation and we are one of the few states that have two standards. Practically every other state only has one. Practically every other state also indicates to their schools that if they don't meet a certain level, and sometimes it is the number of students, sometimes it is a ratio, if they don't meet a certain level, they don't qualify for state aid. So I will be suggesting an amendment that says that if you don't meet accreditation standards you don't qualify for state aid. Now by doing that, we free up this additional amount of funds. I think that the purposes of our government should be to encourage quality, should be to encourage the best that we can do. That is what I have attempted to strive to or towards the length of time that I have been here through 994, through a number of other things that the Education Committee has brought before this Legislature