

that was raised as a result of a sales/income tax, or excuse me, a sales tax increase contained in LB 1059. And that's... Looking back on my votes in nine years on Highway Trust Fund issues, I voted... I carried legislation to raise taxes to support city and county road funds. I have opposed any diversion of things like funding the Highway Patrol operations out of the Highway Trust Fund, have opposed any other significant, even I think when Senator Hall wanted his E & R Chairman briefcase paid out of the Highway Trust Fund, I thought that was too much and I wasn't going to support that kind of a... of a raid on it. But this particular item where the money was raised as part of an education support endeavor, I feel it is appropriate, particularly for this program. Many people have talked about well they support the teacher pay bill, but not using this source of funding. But I have yet to see anybody else come forward, with the exception of saying let's raid the LB 1059 money to pay for... to pay for the teacher pay bill. We'll say, yeah, we don't care, we'll let those people over there pay for it. And rather than have it pay it out of their right-hand pocket, we're going to be magnanimous and have them take it out of their left-hand pocket. That's the only proposal I have seen by anybody here to find it from other sources. My sense is that if we don't fund the teacher pay bill this year, out of this particular methodology, or some other methodology that somebody can amass 25 votes to accomplish, the teacher pay program is dead. You can't say that you support the teacher pay program as some abstract creature out there, and not be willing to push the button to fund it, because what has happened to it, in the last 3 or 4 years, from 20 million to 15 million, now to 7, and we've heard all of the rhetoric in the newspapers and on the floor of the Legislature about how the tough the budget is going to be next year, you know, it's a dead program. And if you're willing to make it be a dead program, that's fine. I mean that's a fine public policy choice that some of you may wish to make, but you need to be accountable for that particular decision. What's happening to property tax is another argument, and it's kind of as if we were back in history, 30 years on this. That we have a horrible road system in Nebraska, and if we invade the Highway Trust Fund we'll be back to the point where our roads will be...

PRESIDENT MOUL: One minute.

SENATOR WITHEM: ...impassable. That's not the truth. We have a good road system in Nebraska. We have an expensive road