

and here we have what really is a brand new program for \$130,000 annually. The question is, what should be done? Should this attempt by Senator McFarland to put out a brand new program at \$130,000 annually be summarily killed at this point, or, instead, should the issue be advanced to Final Reading, or to Select File and then to Final Reading? If it is so advanced, Senator McFarland will soon discover that this will be carrying an appropriations bill with it, a companion star, so to speak. Now, that companion star, unfortunately, has considerable gravity and it will weigh his bill down until the last days of this session. It will be considered...the A bill will prevent us from considering LB 158 on Final Reading until late April or early May, or, I'm sorry, until late May after we have considered the other main line appropriation bills. So in the end, in terms of picking and choosing the kind of programs that this state is going to fund, the kind of initiatives that we are going to do, I think that one can easily choose to give preliminary approval to what Senator McFarland is offering and, in effect, deterring the final priority decision making until the bill comes up on Final Reading in late May, because that will be its life. Now, I support the bill. I support LB 158 and for me it is somewhat of a change in position because I had felt, I have always felt that when we dealt with the student who appears to have considerable potential that we need to make certain that we deal fairly with all students. I am not a...given, I am not an elitist. I think it is important that we deal with students of all capabilities. But I do think that we owe our children who appear to have exceptional talent and ability, whether it be artistic or intellectual, we owe them as many opportunities for education as we can provide to them. We owe it to our state as well to see that that task be done. And, unfortunately, our school districts are of differing quality in getting the job done. If I had a talented child go to Central High School in Omaha, Nebraska, I would have no concern whatsoever that that talented child would have a superb opportunity to fully develop his or her talents and abilities, because Central High School in Omaha offers wonderful programs for talented children and so does Westside High School in Omaha. And that is true for a couple of schools in Lincoln and that may be true for a couple of schools in our larger towns in Nebraska, such as in Grand Island or Kearney. But the horrible truth, ladies and gentlemen, is that the bulk of the high schools in this state are doing a poor job with talented children so that at this point the bulk of the high schools of Nebraska are graduating seniors who are testing below, who are testing below the larger high schools in this state. Those high schools that