

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Landis. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Madam Chair, members of the body, I rise to support the reconsideration of the final passage of LB 922. I was one who was not here this morning, and one of the ironies of life is the reason I wasn't here this morning was, I see Senator Rasmussen looking back this way. She and I were sitting at the same table hearing Jonathan Kozol speak this morning. Jonathan Kozol is an author in the area of education policy. He's just written a book called Savage Inequalities, and the message he gave this morning we should have all been there listening to his message talking about what we have allowed to happen in this country, not as bad in Nebraska...I would take some exception with some of the things he was saying about Nebraska schools and inequalities in Nebraska schools. But what we've allowed to happen in this nation in terms of how we treat some of our citizens versus how we treat others of our citizens, and he was talking about schools in Camden, New Jersey, East St. Louis, where \$4,000 is spent per student in comparison with \$8,000 in suburban schools, \$16,000 in some schools. And the qualifying characteristic of these schools that are savagely unequal tend to be that they have minority populations. And the fact that the power tends to reside in the suburban areas where the white population lives and resides, and they don't have the sensitivity in those areas to do what really needs to be done to bring all of our citizens to an equal level. It was really a powerful message. Not so sure that it relates directly to what Senator Chambers wants to do with this bill dealing with multicultural awareness, but I know it's connected. It's connected to the entire problem we have in our society with the way in which we treat certain parts of our citizens, and the need to change that...that attitude around. Is 922 a perfect bill? It certainly is not a perfect bill. It's Senator Chambers' bill and he's worked hard on it. He's considered things. That does, no, Senator Schimek, that does not explain why it's not a perfect bill simply because it's Senator Chambers' bill is not the reason that it's not a perfect bill, and it will not solve all of the problems. But it's an important step, I think, that this Legislature sends a message to...to its schools that we expect you schools to be dealing with this issue and putting your resources to attempting to end the racism that we have in this country and, yes, that we do have here in Nebraska. Senator Chambers, I'm sorry that I was gone. I think it was an important message I was listening to.