

SENATOR WITHEM: Seriously, is this the Accountability Commission bill as it was introduced, or does it contain the Education Committee amendments?

SENATOR ROBINSON: Contains the amendments.

SENATOR WITHEM: Okay, okay.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Contains the amendments.

SENATOR WITHEM: First of all, I think what Senator Robinson wants to do, by also having us address the overall cost of higher education, is a good idea. So, with one minor change of...on his amendment, I think this will be an amendment we can all support. And simply what my amendment does is it strikes lines 1 and the first part of line 2, where this amendment then becomes an addition to Senator Rasmussen's bill, and is not then a...a striking of her bill, because I think both concepts are ones we need to deal with. The idea of having...and I know it's a broken record out here and people are getting tired of hearing this, but I think it is a system that has proven to work when it's structured properly. We have special ed costs that are going through the ceiling. And we do need to take a look at special ed costs and try to bring those back under control. So the idea of coming to grips with special ed in a manner in which we can see what's causing the increases and try to keep those from ratcheting upward each year is a good idea. It is not, however, a good idea to strike the provisions of LB 520. I...I wish people had been listening more closely to Senator Robinson's remarks and to Senator Rasmussen's remarks, because in listening to those you got an entirely different picture of what has gone on with this measure. Senator Robinson would lead you to believe that this is just some crazy scheme that came down out of the blue, this last summer, and that nobody has ever heard of this before. If you'd have listened to Senator Rasmussen you would have heard of how much work has gone into this with citizens, special ed directors, school administrators, parents of special education kids, parents of kids of special needs working for five years on this concept. We passed this two years ago, I believe, as a model program, we've seen it operate in those model program schools, and it is now...it is working, and it is time to move beyond and apply this to the rest of the state. The comment that Senator Rasmussen or Senator Robinson made that I wish you'd have heard was this idea