

50 percent truant, what are we going to do with those kids? How are we going to handle them? Well, the answers were we can't solve all those problems and we won't solve all those problems with this legislation. Will we heighten awareness? Yes. In school districts in states where they have raised the age, has this made a difference? Yes. Schools are starting to do some very simple things like establish attendance boards where when a student is truant and it becomes a repetitive type thing, the student and the parents or guardians and counselors are called in to sit down and talk about it. Why? What are the reasons? What is underlying these factors? Can they make that kid go to school? Do they have the resource to go out and make them all come to school every day? No, we can't do it now and raising the age won't change that, and I won't lie to you and tell you that it will because it won't. But can it get better? Yes. And is history telling us that it does where this is established? Yes. What happens about increased cost? This is something that is left completely up to the local school district. If a local school district sees that they have the funds or desires to have the funds to find some ways of forming...providing alternative forms of education, yes, they can do that. Would I encourage that? Absolutely. But as we've argued in the past, it doesn't necessarily have to be expensive. Can you be creative in working with your community colleges? Can you be creative in working with the businesses within the communities in the school district where you have your school district located? Yes. Can you work with people in your literacy councils that can come in to help counsel and tutor these individuals? Yes. Does it go back to basics that I have said time, and time again on this floor? We argue this crime bill. We argued juvenile crime bill. It all comes back to education, folks. If we continue to become a throwaway society as it concerns the education of our young people, you are going to continue to see the same results and the same policy matters argued relative to this type of issue. Eleven hundred dollars is the fiscal, no more, no less. Can it cost more if the school districts wish it to cost more? Yes, it can, absolutely. Is it their choice? Yes. Are we mandating? No. But are we going to try to change our mind-set that you can run away from your obligation to be educated at 16 years of age? Yes, we are going to change that mind-set to 18. And is history, where this has been done, saying this has been positive? Yes, it is. This brings you up-to-date on where the bill is. I guess I've probably gone a little past that in my passion on believing in this piece of legislation. I certainly am open to answer any