

Legislature, and each session we have had a discussion of the HELP Fund. But actually there are probably at least twenty-two of us who were not present in 1989, when the HELP Fund was established, and then reaffirmed again in 1991. And so I think it is somewhat helpful to review for you what the intent was of the Legislature, and also maybe to remind some of you of the commitment that was made, those of you who were here, when you established the HELP Fund. By passing HELP, the Legislature established in law, in 1989, and reaffirmed that commitment in 1991, when forty senators voted in favor of establishing HELP to creating a partnership between the Legislature and the local school districts that recognize innovative teaching and the need to improve teacher salaries. It really isn't a question if the state should be involved in teachers salaries, that's on the books and it's law. The issue is simply what the amount should be. For those of you, and that would be about twenty-one of us who were not here, as I said, I think you've seen the handout that indicates the history of the establishment of the HELP Fund. What has happened is what happens with many of us, oftentimes, you make a pledge, you make a commitment, it comes time to fulfill that pledge or commitment and it's been a difficult year. It certainly happens to businesses, it certainly happens to farmers. When you have to go back and say, you know, my commitment hasn't changed to you, but I'm unable to fund it at the level at which I told you I would make that pledge or that commitment. And you say, you know if the year is better in the next year, often even when you make that pledge, if the money is there, I will make that commitment. Well, as we have discussed the HELP Fund in trying to fund it over the years, in trying to find a tax source for it, that's the type of thing that we have said to the teachers, not that we shouldn't be involved, not that the state has not made the commitment, not that the state has not entered on the books the HELP Fund, but simply in difficult times we went and said we can't afford it, and we worked in a partnership with them, and they recognized that at that time the state had to make a cut. And we also said at that time, when we can afford it we will honor that commitment. Well, we come to this year with twenty million dollars that we have in the budget that says that we can afford it. Those of us who are fiscal conservatives would perhaps like to say, I'd rather take that twenty million and put it over into the reserves for the next biennium because we know there are dark clouds out there. But when we consider doing that, we also have to consider, as I said before, what we might do in our businesses or our personal lives, before you move that money