

important to stand up and make that one example of how much we do for some people as compared to others and I would like to suggest that we should not support this amendment. And I will put my light on again, if I think of something else to say, as well.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Lynch. Senator Wehrbein, your light is next, followed by Senators Vrtiska, Bernard-Stevens, Lindsay and Avery.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Madam Speaker and members of the body, the Appropriations Committee did put additional money in to this, and part of the reason was from the recommen...based on the recommendation of the Coordinating Commission. First of all, there is...has been an ongoing and increasing shift from student financial aid, in the form of grants and scholarships, to student loans, which results in students assuming increasing debt burdens to finance their education. Between 189...between 1989 and 1990, and the 1993-94, the four years, federal student loan volumes for students at Nebraska institutions more than doubled, from 43 million to 87 million. In last year, alone, loan volume increased by 36 percent. A survey of Nebraska's peer group institutions reveal that state-supported financial aid per FTE student for every Nebraska public institution was less than the average of its peers. The range was from 13 percent to 74 percent less than the average of the various institutions. Overall, Nebraska public institutions average 49 percent less in state-supported financial aid for FTE student than the average support provided by their peer institutions. The commission, that is the Coordinating Commission, estimates that only 20 percent of those eligible for aid under the program it administers actually receive assistance under the program. Given current levels of funding, financial aid is necessarily restricted to students with the greatest financial need. And that is, in essence, why we did increase this, in some cases fairly significantly, the amount of money going for these scholarship purposes because of where we rank. We have listened to the Coordinating Commission fairly carefully in most of our deliberations. It was designed to do some things with our education, to do some coordinating, and so forth, and this is an area they also recommended some increasing support. And so the committee felt that even though we realize this is fairly significant, it is important to higher education in Nebraska, and so we have, accordingly, funded it accordingly, not anywhere near to the degree of need or even the request, but it is