

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office  
FLOOR DEBATE

May 21, 2001

LB 305

to teachers, and that was 84 percent. Now, realizing that's a little general and when it gets down to your pocketbook it might be a little different in your...in your response, this year I asked a more direct question. I said, do you support increasing the state sales tax one-half cent to increase teachers' salaries? Do you support increasing the state sales tax one-half cent to raise teachers' salaries? And in that survey response 58 percent said yes; 42 percent said no. And I think there is public support and I think there is public concern, and that we're going to be looked to, to take the action that's going to make a difference, that's going to have the outcome that we desire. And just saying, well, other states have problems and, you know, we've always paid teachers poorly and, you know, what's...what's the big deal, the problem is we have never been in a position in this state that we are in now where people are not going into the profession, where we are not internally competitive that with other occupations in the state. And I disagree with the comments that have been made about what other people make in general. This is a professional position. This takes four years of college that people spend a great deal of money and time on, and it deserves to be rewarded and it shouldn't be just compared to every job in the state. Because this is a professional position, if we're going to make comparisons, it should be to other professional positions. I believe that, as well-intended as this amendment is, and at various times during this process I thought maybe there would be a compromise, but I have...I'm concerned that we're not making a bold enough move and that what we do isn't going to get the outcome. I also want to say, if you do adopt this amendment, that this isn't the end of addressing the teacher shortage problem. This may help in a few aspects of it, but it is not big enough or comprehensive enough in terms of raising salaries to be able to curb the problem of people choosing other professions because they can't afford to stay in a teaching profession. I also think we have to be externally competitive. Other states, as we know and as several of the e-mails said, are actively recruiting in Nebraska and they...

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Time.

SENATOR THOMPSON: ...are being very successful. Thank you.