

State of Nebraska. Now every now and then you and I have occasion to take a look at the school code and you know that you and I collectively over the last twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years have added provision after provision in the school code with respect to subject offerings in schools such as courses on Americanism, with respect to the way schools express their patriotism such as requiring students to say the Pledge of Allegiance on a regular basis, with respect to who can teach in schools by requiring certified teachers, with respect to a variety of different things. You and I have never been any strangers in carrying out our constitutional responsibility in providing free instruction in the common schools of this state. We have never been any strangers to setting standards for our schools. Very clearly what has happened here is that the Education Committee has offered a solid, sound, responsible role and mission statement for all the public schools in our state to follow. I read the role and mission statement over and it is a statement with which I would have total and absolute agreement. It is clear. It is concise. And it is a very broad expression of what it is we as the peoples' representatives believe all the schools in this state should do as a minimum to ensure educational quality for our children. The fiscal analyst has looked at the statement. They say there is no current fiscal impact. And it may well be that in subsequent years there is a fiscal impact. I don't know. But if there is, so be it. You and I well know that today our society is losing economically to other societies. We continue to read with amazement how the Japanese are able to outproduce our own labor, how the Japanese are able to develop new technologies in areas that we had once been pre-eminent. There are a lot of reasons why those kinds of things are occurring but one of the primary reasons is that we have lost our way when it comes to public education. We no longer demand the excellence of our students that we once demanded. We are prepared to accept "fluff" courses instead of solid learning. We are prepared to underfund the public education because we think that is what the taxpayers really want. That is not true. You and I will inherit the whirlwind tomorrow if we don't provide for our children today. And in my opinion, one of the very basic building blocks in providing for our children today is for us to establish a solid, responsible role and mission statement for our public schools which is what LB 338 is. And if this role and mission statement ultimately requires our commitment of more dollars to public schools, then we should be there with the money because we cannot afford to live in a society of illiterate persons, of people not capable of exercising sound judgment, of people who cannot be creative and cannot think independently for themselves.