

SPEAKER MARVEL PRESIDING

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I would like to defend very strongly because I feel very strongly that though this is obviously not the only solution to the problem or not even the most important solution to the problem, it is a piece that we have to fit into the puzzle. Senator Vickers says that his teachers probably rejoiced or were rejoicing when he left school and probably a majority of this Legislature would rejoice if he left the Legislature but I wouldn't suggest for a minute that that would be good for Senator Vickers or good for the State of Nebraska or for his constituency. The dropout rate, the dropout rate in the State of Nebraska is around twenty percent. We are giving up on one in every five students. Don't be confused by the statistics you see that say the dropout rate is three or four or five percent. They are talking about the dropout rate for the entire school system for one year. But for one high school class, for one high school class progressing from freshman year to senior year, by the time they graduate as seniors, twenty percent of them will have dropped out and the irony of this is that for the last five or six years the economic times have been good times, perhaps the best times in all of this century, in all of the history of our country. So the reason that they are dropping out does not have to do basically with economics. It has to do with attitudes, their own attitude, and it has to do with the attitude of society towards what they are doing. It has to do with our attitude with regard to what we say. Is high school important or is it not important? Is finishing high school important or is it not important? What happens when we blithely let students drop out from school? They go out and then this time of high economic unemployment, the highest we have had in years, they flood the labor market with more unskilled labor, with more unskilled labor when the one crying need in this country at this time is for skilled labor, for people with skills that they have learned on jobs or they have learned hopefully in school. And when they go out at this time of high unemployment and compete in that unskilled market, who do they compete with? They compete with the dropouts of three years ago and five years ago and ten years ago who are still in that unskilled labor market. These dropouts of three and five and ten years ago who are on that market but who really need those jobs because now they have wives and now they have kids, so in comes the high school dropout with no wife, no kids, takes the job from somebody with a wife and kids and all of a sudden we have three more kids on