

SPEAKER MARVEL: The Chair recognizes Senator Pirsch and then Senator Koch.

SENATOR PIRSCH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the body, when this issue came up as LB 472A last year, I was planning to vote for it. I, too, felt very strongly about separation of church and state and religious freedom, but in the span of time since that time, and fortunately or unfortunately for some because of the constitutional provisions, that was delayed, I have thought again and some of the things that Senator Beutler referred to are very pertinent to this fact and why we have religious schools that are dealing with the imposition of the state to the extent that they are. You know public schools are a lot like government. They are only as good as the support and the attention that the citizens give it. And I support public education and I guess my biggest fear in this bill is the abandonment of the public educational system. We see this happening in the east. Early education was formed only for the rich and through the church schools. Church schools actually led the way, and when public schools were organized and compulsory attendance was required, then we started truly reaching out to all children and extending to all children an opportunity to grow and to learn and to thrive. I am a Christian and it bothers me to hear this issue called the Christian School issue. This is far more reaching than just Christian schools. If we have complete confidence in christianity as Christians, that would be fine but this is far more reaching than just Christian schools and I wish that they would not refer to it as that. Some horrible things have been done in history in the name of christianity, things which I abhor, the Inquisition, the Crusades, the witch hunts in Salem were done in the name of christianity. To withdraw and retreat for the Christians or for any other sect is to me or I fear perhaps a move to narrow-mindedness and a doctrine that is not with the world. And Jesus Christ himself said that you are the salt of the earth and the salt is the most potent when it is sprinkled evenly across the surface, and he also said that we should be in the world not of the world but in the world working and I think that if we withdraw and abandon our public schools to go into our "religious" confinement that we will be the loser, the public schools will be the losers also. I will make this short. I didn't intend to talk on it but I felt that I should explain my vote for voting against this because I very sincerely feel that religion is separate from the state, and yet as a Christian, and I assume other faiths, you carry your religion, you carry your faith into every aspect of your life. You are not just a Christian in church. You are not just a Christian