

SENATOR STONEY: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Legislature, in response to some of the comments made by colleagues here in the body, I would like to say in rebuttal to what Senator Koch has said relative to budgets being established, et cetera, that a number of agencies and commissions of state government had established their budgets and we are looking to them for their participation in the budget reduction in their particular area. Now I know that the average cost of providing this service to a student is approximately \$152 a year. The state was subsidizing that amount by \$40 making the net effect of \$112 the responsibility of the parent. And, ladies and gentlemen, for a program such as this, where does the bulk of that responsibility lie? Does it lie with the parent, or does it rely with the taxpayer? The net effect will be for a parent that with this funding who would pay \$72 for their child to participate in this program, they would pay what they are presently paying, approximately \$112. In response to Senator Vickers' comments, this is, indeed, a general fund appropriation. It was included in the budget. It was taken from general fund dollars. It may have been earmarked for that program, but it is my understanding that one of the reasons that we are here is to search for areas where reductions can be made in the budget. And again I will say that this is one area that I was able to identify. I think with the economy the way that it is, it is very difficult for me to feel comfortable with a program that received an increase in funding of 80 plus percent. I see nothing wrong with the parents paying the additional difference for their child to participate in this program. I appreciate Senator Cope's remarks regarding traffic fatalities. I have no figures that would indicate that those that participate in the Driver's Education program have a better record relative to property damage, injuries, deaths, than those that do not participate. I would say that we should focus on drunk driving among young people. I would think that that results in damages to property, to lives, much more than those that have not participated in the Driver's Education program. Again, ladies and gentlemen, it is a decision that we must reach. What responsibility does the state have in providing a service such as this to those in the public schools? I feel very confident that the majority would believe that it is the parents' responsibility rather than the taxpayer per se and would request that you would support me in adopting this amendment so that we could reduce the budget by an additional 600 thousand plus dollars. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Wagner. Oh, okay, pardon me, I was going to...Senator Wagner was standing up