

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Elmer, please.

SENATOR ELMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is a very interesting discussion about property tax. We are asking...we are being asked to put aside \$50 million, which is, what, about 5 percent of the total property taxes levied in the state today. We are asked to do it without knowing how it would possibly be applied to the property tax, itself. There is a proposal out there from the teachers of the state to spend approximately \$50 million for teachers salaries. If it is applied to that, then we have zero property tax relief in the state. If we use it for Howard Lamb's proposal that would rebate a percentage to each person that pays property tax relief, then it would be property tax relief. At the same time, we have to pay for it. I think it is judicious if we know how this is going to be used before the commitment is made. Whether we divide the questions, whether we attack anything else, those are the basic principles we have to address. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Ah, yes, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, very briefly, I will save most of my rhetoric for the closing. Senator Elmer, I think you missed the point. The point of the bill is that we have spent the last ten years in this body trying to get every "i" dotted, every "t" crossed, every semicolon right before we bring forth a property tax relief package. That hasn't worked. Property taxes are, and I will use the word again, immoral in this state, the level at which we tax the property owner. The point is we need to take a stand. Is this Legislature going to provide some money for property tax relief this session, or are we not? Senator Wesely, I think Senator Korshoj is 100 percent right. Not through anybody's fault, not through any evil designs or anything, but the process, if we let the process continue, the process will be the state agencies, those others funded from the General Fund will be up at the trough. They will be getting their fill, and when they are finally full, the process will have concluded, and they will step away from the trough, and what is left, and, Frank, you have been out on the farm, you know how much is left after those hogs get up to the trough and start eating, is going to go to the property taxpayers. And we will say, doggone it, there doesn't seem to be much left there, property taxpayers, but next year we are going to order more corn or we are going to order more slop for the hogs, and there will be plenty there for you