

I have a hearing notice or cancellation of hearing notice by General Affairs. Senator Landis would like to print amendments to LB 361. (See page 884 of the Legislative Journal.)

Senator Rod Johnson would like to withdraw LB 748. That will be laid over. And two gubernatorial appointee confirmation hearing reports offered by Natural Resources. Those, as well, will be laid over, Mr. President. That is all that I have.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Moving to General File, LB 744.

CLERK: Mr. President, LB 744 was a bill that was introduced by Senator Withem. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 19, referred to the Education Committee, advanced to General File. I have no amendments to the bill, Mr. President.

SPEAKER BARRETT: The Chair recognizes the Chair of the Education Committee, Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. LB 744 is a bill concerning which I have passed out a couple of handouts, that you haven't been inundated with handouts yet this morning, so you probably ought to be able to find them. What the bill deals with is, in a general sense, it is one of several bills that have come from the Education Committee this year dealing with the rather fuzzy issue, difficult issue to grab a hold of, but incredibly important issue, that of quality education, and helping us as public policy makers both at the state level and at the local level get a handle on how well our schools are doing. Before I get into specifics of the bill, I would like to share just some general views on this question of quality of education in Nebraska. One of the problems I think we have as a Legislature, as a state, policy makers in the area of education, is we tend to have an overly smug view, I think, of the quality of education that we offer our young people in this state. We look at some very isolated, very, in many cases, misleading statistics, such as, college entrance examinations, graduation rates, things along that line, to prove to us that we have quality education. When you get deeper into what is quality education, what indicators do we have that point to quality, they really aren't there. If you will look at some of the quotes you have on your sheet, your sheet here, it will indicate that any number of people that have taken a look at quality education in Nebraska have drawn the conclusion that we just don't have enough data available about our schools to make