

The bill is a product of two concurrent ideas. One of those ideas is our New Horizons process which is looking at a number of things we need to do to improve our state in the future and one of those changes recommended by the citizens that came to the table over the last year to write that report was we need to look at making some very fundamental changes within our schools, fundamental changes concerning the way young people are taught and the way young people learn. The same thing was happening with the Education Committee. We had a study resolution last year. We had a tremendously well-attended conference in December of this year on this topic of restructuring. We had the staff person from the National Governor's Association, we had a staff person from the Education Commission of the States, staff person for the Coalition of Essential Schools, all come to Nebraska and lead this discussion and there are a lot of people in the state that are very, very serious about this idea of restructuring. The reason people are serious about this is because of the state of quality in our education system, not necessarily just here in Nebraska, although I'm one who tends to believe we do need to improve here in Nebraska, but nationwide we are having problems with our education system and we've tinkered with it a lot. We've done some changes here, some changes there, funded some programs, taken away some programs, added some new ideas, but people are beginning to question whether those ideas of the early eighties are really bringing about the type of improvements that we need. Just some statistics and some information that are startling to me when I hear them, and I don't know if they will be to you or not, but last year it is estimated that businesses in our country spent \$25 billion, \$25 billion of training young people to enter the workforce. This is not training them on specific jobs, how to use a particular machine, how to fill out particular reports. This is providing them the basic skills, the entry level skills that they should have got in their high school education, but they didn't get it. I'm reading a book by David Kearnes, the Chief Executive Officer of the Xerox Corporation, makes the point that 700,000 students are dropping out of our schools each year. Another 700,000 are not getting the quality of education that they need to meet the basic entry level requirements of the jobs that are for them out there. We are in the midst of a constant economic battle with other nations, and as we continue to produce a workforce that's not able to enter the workforce and carry out the skills, we're having problems. Heard an example this weekend, an example from a Nebraska community where a business CEO who runs a plant in that community went to the