

talk about restructuring and how schools can be improved on the local level and at the same time the competing for grants given out by the state to schools that are implementing model restructuring programs.

PRESIDENT: Senator Withem, may I interrupt you a moment, please? (Gavel.) Please, let's hold our conversation down so we can hear the speaker. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Thank you, Mr. President. What we're doing with the bill now is phasing it in and it's probably a good idea. This is not a phase in to buy votes or anything because the bill is not that expensive and we could easily afford to do this all in one year, but it's probably a good idea to phase it in. The first year to do the forums around the state, the discussion about what restructuring is, identify needs to improve schools, go through all of that process the first year and then after we've done that, have the schools do their planning at the local level, set their grants into place and make it a...to make it...they'd go into place the second session. Fourth thing that the amendments do is that we...originally the bill was to be administered as a function of the Department of Education. To be real blunt I guess, on the floor that there were some individuals told me later on that they were uncomfortable with that. They are uncomfortable with that if we're talking about changing the way in which schools operate and function, that we ought to have it be more of an outside look as opposed to an inside look. So we're established this school restructuring commission that was created, is going to be given greater authority to operate independently. Final thing I guess that we do is that there was some concern, I think, expressed by Senator Warner on the floor, that what are we doing? What are the schools going to be using the \$50,000 for? Are we going to ask them to make expensive improvements in their school, continue to fund those on an ongoing basis at the state level, or are we going to have them make expensive changes in their school and then pull the money away from them after they've made them? It is the intent, and hopefully the amendment is drafted to make this clear, it is the intent first of all that this is not an ongoing program that will be in the state budget year after year after year, that the grants of up to \$40,000 each will be used for one-time expenditures, staff training, purchase of new equipment, purchase of new instructional materials, whatever might be needed for them to implement their restructuring plans. It will not be in the