

Senator Bernard-Stevens said, we don't know how, in reality, how this bill will actually work out there in rural Nebraska. Now, I like the concept. I buy the concept. It's one of those things we can be real leaders in this. I think Senator Baack and I, I remember this summer when all of us went to a variety of different nationwide meetings of state legislators, the whole concept of school choice was hot, it was a hot topic. I remember I sat there and listened, well, that will be about four or five years away in Nebraska. I think Senator Baack probably felt the same way. Now, primarily because of Senator Baack and others very good work on this bill, it's not four or five years away. We are sitting here today ready to make the jump to school choice, much sooner than many of us expected, and, conceptually, I think it's a wise jump. But I, as I've said, am very concerned about how this bill will play out in rural Nebraska. That's why I want to see how it plays in Iowa, and I'd like to see how it plays in Minnesota when it gets to the rural areas. I'm going to support Senator Hefner's amendment. I hope the body does support this. If it fails, I don't know what I'll do on the bill. It's one of those bills I like it so much in concept I really want to vote for it, but something deep down here says in reality you are talking about school consolidation with this bill and it is going to happen, whether it's intended to or not, and I honestly do not think it's intended to, the result of it may very well be. I think we're wise. We're on... We've been undoubtedly, even though we've talked about it several days, this whole issue is on the fast track in Nebraska, primarily because Senator Withem and others and Senator Baack made it a high priority item, as it should be. But we're moving... even if we pass the bill with the Hefner amendment, we're probably light years ahead of where Senator Baack and Senator Withem and myself and others thought we'd be on the 46th day of this session in 1989 for that session dealing with the issue of school choice. I support Senator Hefner's amendment in lieu of trying to bracket the bill. Let's vote the concept in. Let's vote the concept in, let's really see how it plays out in the rural areas in the only two examples we have to look at, and that is Iowa and Minnesota.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. May I introduce some guests, please, in the north balcony. We have 30 statewide members of W.I.F.E., Women Involved in Farm Economics. Would you ladies please stand and be recognized by the Legislature. Thank you for visiting us this morning. Senator Withem, followed by Senator Lamb, and then Senator Dierks.