

total salary package, these funds shall be considered.

PRESIDENT: That is correct. Now several of these lights have been on for quite some time and we have changed the amendment since they came on, so you are going to have to help me as to whether or not you wish to speak on the first portion of this amendment which has to do with the "separately from" and "together with" situation. Senator Chizek, did you wish to talk about that? Senator Schmit, did you wish to talk about that? Senator Withem, about the separately?

SENATOR WITHEM: Yeah, I would, Mr. President. I think Senator Moore has done something that really gets to the heart of this bill, and the rationale for the bill, and there has been something I have wanted to say on this bill since it was introduced. To be honest with the members of the body, when the folks from NSEA came to me and talked with me about this bill early on, I had really mixed feelings about it, and part of the mixed feelings were the results of my questioning what is the state's role in appropriating money for teachers' salaries? Does the state have a role or ought this be continued to happen on the local level? I believe that is what Senator Moore's amendment does, strikes the philosophical basis of the bill. Should we continue with our process of funding education exclusively at the local level, making the teachers' salaries a part of that process, making all of those decisions made at the local level, or is there an overriding state interest in funding teachers' salaries? I've come to the conclusion that there is, that there is an overriding state interest in doing a lot of things in this area of education. We have been on this floor of this Legislature for 10 or 15 years, have been monkeying with things at the edge of education that we say is educational improvement. This year I think we're beginning to get to the heart of some education improvement questions. Our bill yesterday that Senator Baack brought us, LB 183, a couple of the bills that the Education Committee brought to you that we dealt with on Tuesday that weren't as controversial as the other ones, but we're beginning to get to the heart of education quality issues. I believe the state does have a vested interest in the salaries that are paid to teachers. Why do I say that? I am concerned that in our state, across the nation as a matter of fact, but particularly in Nebraska our very brightest, most capable people that are coming out of our institutions of higher learning are going into professions other than education. Our best math graduates, our best science graduates are starting for