

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Mr. President, members, just briefly on the amendment, I, too, support...I wasn't going to speak except I agree wholeheartedly with what Senator Schmit has done. I have stated all along that I could support this if I knew where the money was. I haven't seen the money. This does it. There is one thing that is left out of this particular amendment, perhaps we need to work on it, is, how do we guarantee that this will go to property tax relief? Simply setting out money and sending back money doesn't go quite far enough yet, in my mind, to be sure that we get a property tax relief or reduction back home and I think that should be part of it, if we can figure that out as we go along on LB 89, I would support that. In other words, I see as a shift, this is the time to make that philosophical shift from a property tax at the local level to a state sales and/or income tax. Perhaps that will be modified in time, but this is the vehicle we need to do that and I could support the bill eventually on that basis. So maybe this is the time to raise the issue. Let us figure out what we can do to be absolutely sure there will be no property tax increase locally. I would say forever, if that was possible. Make sure that this does truly make a shift and not just simply an additional increase.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Smith, would you care to discuss the amendment to the amendment?

SENATOR SMITH: Yes, thank you, Mr. President. I would very much be in support of Senator Withem's amendment to the amendment and Senator Schmit's amendment as well. Senator Schmit said something that is kind of cute to me and it's a little bit different than what Senator Elmer just said. He said tell them if we're going to dance, we've got to pay the orchestra, and that's exactly true. If we could adopt...if we can put our money where our mouth is, if we can really say we're going to be willing to fund this, we're going to be up front about the fact that it is going to cost money and it's not going to come from property tax increases and if we can adopt the one-cent increase and put it into the fund which is going to end up paying this account that we're talking about plus the rest of it going into a Property Tax Relief Account, I am going to be able to support this bill. It's as simple as that and I would ask the rest of the body to be as honest as you can be about not just saying oh, to the teachers, yes, I want to do this, but then to the taxpayers, but I'm not going to give you a tax increase.