

at the level it's now funded at. As a matter of fact, I have an amendment on the A bill to lower that into something maybe we can work with. But I think we are making a major mistake trying to marry these two things together. I think, for once, Senator Lynch and I will probably agree, because I think whatever we do for state aid to education or teachers' salaries needs to be totally separate of property tax relief, needs to be totally separate of that because whatever money we spend we have to say, we're going to spend money on education whether it be distributed through 89 or whether it be distributed through state aid. We can't sit here and lie to the people and say we're going to accomplish property tax relief with it because, as you all know, I mean, if you're going to support 89 because a little sliver of it is going to accomplish property taxes, you're ignoring the great portion of the bill that's dealing with teachers' salaries. And to say you're supporting it because it has some property tax relief in it just doesn't make any sense. And I think we should not be confusing the issues. I will oppose Senator Schmit's amendment because I, myself...I, myself, have always said, the only way I'm going to raise taxes this year, the only way I'm going to raise taxes this year is if that money goes to property tax relief and if you support Senator Schmit's amendment, part of it is going to property tax relief, part of it's going to teachers' salaries, and you just...you confuse the issue too much. I prefer to leave it clean. Let's see whatever...you know, the state budget, we know, is going to go up by 60, 80, \$100 million this year. I think Senator Lynch is right, if state aid to education in whatever form it's in is a priority, let's take it out of that, but let's don't confuse it with property tax relief and sell it under the color of property tax relief to the public. Let's sell teachers' salaries, teachers' salaries, and deal with them that way. And so, with that in mind, I oppose Senator Withem's amendment just like I will...I dangerously oppose my good friend and seatmate, Senator Schmit's.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Bernard-Stevens, followed by Senator Withem, please.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. President. I just wanted to clarify, I think more for myself than...and, hopefully, maybe some other members of the body who might be somewhat confused as to what exactly the Withem amendment to the Schmit amendment does. In essence, I think what's happening here is we're going to cut it down from one cent to a half a