

Senator Withem's amendment because then we finally got it into a form where the proponents of LB 89, if they want to fund it at that level, they will have a chance to put their money where their mouth is. I'm willing to give them a chance to do that.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Ashford, please, followed by Senator Wesely.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. President. Let's try to cut through this jacking around on this bill. And I think that in deciding that the teachers are at fault because they brought this bill, or some other groups are at fault because they brought this bill, and someone is at fault because they tried to put property tax in with teachers salaries, that is just a waste of our time. The teachers salaries make up between 70 and 80 percent of the budgets for most school districts in the State of Nebraska. The teachers in the State of Nebraska are underpaid across the state. It's an issue that was raised in this Legislature by myself, Senator McFarland, Senator Lynch and Senator Crosby because it is a needed...it is a measure that needs to be discussed by this body. Property taxes are affected by the cost of education. Property taxes go up when school districts are required to, or for whatever reason raise teachers salaries in their particular district because the salary level is a significant portion of the budget for each one of those school districts. It is a legitimate concern of this body to deal with whether or not we are going to put money into a fund to help defray that cost of the local school district. That is a reasonable argument, it is the argument that Governor Branstad raised, two years ago, when he successfully convinced the Legislature of the State of Iowa to put into a fund \$100 million to help local subdivisions pay the cost of education, the most significant portion of which is teacher salaries. Now, you know, when I was brought this bill by the NSEA, and they did bring me this bill, that is the organization that represents the teachers of the State of Nebraska. Those are the individuals who happen to know about what their conditions of work are, and in talking to school districts and in my district, or school board members in my district and superintendents in my district there was a real concern, yes, teacher salaries are 80 percent of our budget. Yes, I think the State of Nebraska does need to look at it, and yes, we think there are some good ideas here. And the property tax relief part of it, yes, we need to look at the property tax relief part of it. And I don't see anything nefarious or wrong about raising those issues. I'm not going to