

get into the box of voting for a sales tax increase when we don't need it. I'm not going to vote for the Withem amendment. I'm not going to vote for the Schmit amendment, and I'm not going to vote for any sales tax increase to fund this bill. I'm going to vote for a level of funding for teachers salaries that is reasonable within the budgetary constraints that we have. That's appropriate public policy, whether it's 40 million, or 30 million, or 60 million, that is what we need to discuss. And I think when...I told the NSEA when this bill was brought to me that if the projections were as they were I didn't feel we needed a tax increase. If we put a tax increase on this bill I don't believe it would survive a veto. Let's just deal with the issue straight up and stop clogging this up and stop casting aspersions at one group or the other. Let's start dealing with what is a valid public policy consideration of this state. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT PRESIDING

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Wesely, please.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. I first would rise in support of the amendment offered by Senator Withem. I think it does cut the issue down to the exact point at which we can decide whether to proceed or not. I do think that we've gotten waylaid. I think Senator Crosby had some nice comments the other day, when last we were on this, talking about teachers as a little bird out on the windowsill waiting for some attention. I think clearly we've argued the financial aspects of this issue and haven't talked much about education or what its value is. A couple of points I'd make. First off, I think it's premature to move into the financial issues at this stage of the debate. I do support the Withem amendment because I think it brings the issue down the point it should. But I do not think I will support the amendment to the bill. I think in addition, in addition in my view we have got to understand what the people are thinking out there. And I've talked to a few of those people, and for a long time I've talked about the revenue picture and where we're at on taxes. The point I have made time and again is that we were having more revenue than was being projected, and that has proven true, that the reserves that we talked about were unbelievable, the largest in the country, a higher percent reserve than any state in the country at this point. We're now approaching almost \$300 million. The message has gotten through to the people out across the State of