

Nebraska. They understand that we have this reserve, this surplus, or whatever you want to call it is out there. What they are saying is how can we now talk about a tax increase when we've had the income tax increase that we talked about and the revenue increase that has resulted from the economy being good, and they're saying, how can that Legislature be spending the time they are, day after day on this issue of a tax increase? They're wondering what the justification is. And I'm wondering as well, at this point, when we don't have all the facts that we need to have to make that decision, those facts will be forthcoming when the Appropriations Committee does their job and on the 17th of April comes forward with their budget we'll have an idea where we're at, what our choices are, what our options are. At the same time there are many other issues laying on Final Reading ready for attention and action. And those are there and need to be considered. It seems to me that we need to move this bill along, that we need to advance this piece of legislation, that we need to deal with the financial aspects of this and everything else in a broader context than we are right now. I mean we're focusing in on this particular bill. And it is a big ticket item, maybe the biggest that we'll consider this year. But it ought not be isolated on this financial aspect. I mean there are other issues out there that cost money, that will have an impact on the budget. And we're not talking about having sales tax or other increases for those items. It seems to me we're isolating and unfairly dealing with this particular issue. I'm going to pass out for you a handout from a study that was done by the Corporation for Enterprise Development. This handout will indicate to you that a study has been done on different states and how their economic development efforts have compared. What it shows is that those states that did best were those that were willing to invest in the basics, such as education, technology and capital markets. This is an investment. And whether we have to raise a tax or not, I don't know yet. But certainly we have to consider the fact that investment in education is an investment in economic development in our future. So I clearly think we ought to deal with this issue, advance the bill and consider in the context of the overall budget picture and the overall revenue and fiscal picture what we need to be doing here. Then I don't know, if Senator Bernard-Stevens would like to take whatever time I have left, I'd like to defer to him and give him that time.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Minute and a half, Senator Bernard-Stevens.