

March 22, 1989

LB 89

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Withem, followed by Senator Moore, and then Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR WITHEM: Mr. President and members of the body, I will be brief because there has been a lot of discussion on this debate but there is one aspect of the debate I would at least like to repeat, comments I made the other day. There are probably two good reasons to support this legislation. Most of this discussion has focused on reason one and that is that there are currently some very qualified individuals in our state that are working in the teaching profession that deserve more money and I am for the bill for that reason. But, for me, that's not enough of a reason to come in and support LB 89 which is a fairly radical departure from the way in which public school teachers are paid. The more compelling state interest public policy consideration behind supporting LB 89 really doesn't deal with those teachers that are currently in the classroom. I feel for them. I believe they need more dollars but the real reason for supporting this is because of what is happening in our teachers' colleges. What's happening when these kids that are juniors in high school, seniors in high school are making career decisions, more and more of the best and brightest of those young people are making determinations to do anything but go into teaching. They see starting salaries in people with a Bachelor of Arts in Business; an MBA in Business, redundant term, I realize, but MBA; degrees in mathematics, degrees in science, start in the field with salaries that are much, much higher than any public school can come up with. What we're going to be left with...I'm not saying we have it now but what we're going to be left with will be those people who score in the bottom half, bottom fourth of their graduating classes in college being the ones that go into the classroom. Those will be the individuals that will be shaping the future of our young people and we can't afford that. We can't afford to have a society this next generation that's going to have to become more competitive, more skilled, more knowledgeable for us maintain our standard of living. We can't have their future molded and guided by less than the best and the brightest coming out of our colleges. That, I think, is what Senator Wesely may have been talking about before. It's my reason for supporting this bill. It's my reason for going beyond the typical labor negotiation process that we usually go through to fund teachers' salaries. We need to be looking toward the future, we need to be looking...doing that much, much more in this body, that's what our New Horizons project is about, our New Seeds project is all