

reevaluate, look again, see what else we need to do. But to sit here and say, no, I'm going to pick my excuse and we're going to let this bill die because I have another priority, then let that be the word that goes out...we do not put a high priority. And I think this bill must go. It should go. We owe it to go and let's look at it again. Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator McFarland, then Senator Schmit.

SENATOR MCFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. President. Whatever Senator Bernard-Stevens said, I would just say, me too. Can't top that. Senator Nelson says sit down. I've got a few things I would like to say. We won't take a vote on that whether I sit down or not. I just...Senator Wehrbein, I hope not only do you vote on this on this initial reading, I hope you will vote on it two more times. Three votes would be the appropriate amount because I think this is a legitimate bill, a legitimate cause and there are legitimate reasons for supporting it. And I hope as each individual senator considers his or her vote on it that they analyze it in terms of do they specifically think that teachers' salaries need to be improved? Because this is really a teachers' salary bill and that is the issue that needs to be focused on. And I hope and trust that individuals will not try to evade their responsibility and duck the question by saying that they...by trying to rationalize a "no" vote with some kind of lame excuse that there is no funding mechanism or that there is no particular designated appropriation for it, because those are lame excuses. If, in fact, it's a good cause, we can come up with the money. Certainly, we have a lot of money right there right now. The primary reason that I like the bill and that I signed on as co-sponsor is my fear that all too many teachers leave the teaching profession because of the salary. They go into the profession young, energetic, enthusiastic and they serve in that profession maybe three, four or five years and at that point they look at their career and they look what's ahead and they say to themselves, I can make more money elsewhere, I can have a better career elsewhere. And, as a result, we have a lot of dedicated teachers, we have a lot of...we still have a lot of young teachers in the classroom but we are missing the 20, 25-year-old teacher who is...who is superbly trained in their field, who is tremendously academic and intellectual and who can really benefit and stimulate students in the high school or elementary school setting. We are losing those people because when they look down the road they do not see a reasonable salary scale available for them to