

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Withem, please, followed by Senator Pirsch.

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, in others, maybe I can provide a little historical background on this, maybe respond to some of Senator Hartnett's questions and some of the other people have had. As I understand this issue, and, Senator Wesely, I know, is fairly knowledgeable about this because he brought the...led last year's bill in by a leash here to deal with a situation with Southeast Community College. Prior to that, I think Senator Smith and Senator Nelson had one. Prior to that, Senator Dave Newell had one. But the Legislature, our predecessors here in the Legislature back in the mid-seventies, just to pick a date, became very concerned about the proliferation of capital construction at the various community college campuses in our state. So they placed a cap on the amount of capital construction projects that could take place on a campus without a vote of the people at \$200,000. What we ended up with then was any number...if you go to some of these campuses, you will see, instead of one big building that looks like it would have made sense, a series of small \$200,000 buildings around the campus. So that's the way they got around this particular cap. Then Omaha...Fort Omaha Campus at Omaha needed some capital construction project. They convinced the Legislature it was cost effective. The Legislature, at that time, did not want to eliminate this cap though. So they passed very specific type of legislation that would have allowed only capital construction to take place at Fort Omaha Campus. Shortly thereafter, Central, I believe it was, was it the Hastings Campus...it was the Hastings Campus, a similar sort of situation. So we passed a bill specifically for them. Sidney Campus, didn't we do something for the Sidney Campus once, I believe something for the Sidney Campus; last time around something for Southeast, a time before? Now it's Northeast's turn. In a lot of ways it doesn't make a whole lot of sense, I guess. But, as an Education Committee, we heard a proposal last year that would simply get rid of this language altogether. We felt, as a committee, that we need...still need some sort of a check over this capital construction that they should have to come to the Legislature to make their case, and they have in each case. What we tend to have is a system now of de facto legislative approval of any capital construction project above \$200,000. Looking at them the way they're written here, it may not appear to make sense but the system, I think, probably does. They have go to suggest...they have got to prove that it is a