

focus on why higher ed needs to be addressed that it needs to be in the bill, that we cannot separate the fact that we have an institution in Kearney, Nebraska that has outgrown, in many ways, its relationship with the other three state colleges. And I would invite Senators Kristensen and Langford to address us on some of the uniqueness of Kearney, because they have the facts and the figures and the statistics. I don't think you can separate those. But what I'm doing is I don't want my bill, my priority bill, my focus of the bill to be lost and gobbled up with the discussion on the Kearney issue, so I'm giving you an opportunity to vote on whether you want the Kearney issue there or not. The purpose of 247, as it was originally introduced, is to take a critical action-oriented look at higher education, to address the fact that, yes, we have some concerns in higher education that haven't been addressed. Yes, we've had multitudes of citizen study commissions take a look at higher education and then we've ignored their results. We spent two hundred plus million dollars on higher education out of our budget, half of our state government operations budget goes to higher education, yet we're sitting here now with an Attorney General's Opinion that might lead us to believe, if we follow that literally, that we don't have any control over how those monies are spent. We give them not only to the university, as we do under Exon v. The Board, we also have to give them to the trustees of the state colleges and let them spend it the way they please, without any strings attached. We've got a situation that when the Speaker of our Legislature calls together segments of higher education to talk about coordinating telecommunications that they can't even agree on what the issue is, that when we direct...when we, the Legislature, directs that a study on how to coordinate nursing education take place, that we get the results back, and the way we're going to coordinate is we're going to let each campus decide what it is that they teach, that when you try to set up a policy analysis center for education in the university campus you end up with bickering back and forth between the two campuses, the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the Lincoln campus; that when you try to consolidate programs you can't get it done. When you try to get a focus on what direction we should be going in higher education, you can't get it done. I know Senator Scofield made some very good arguments, that maybe the Withem amendment is not the right way to go. I'm perfectly willing to talk about what the right way to go is. But what I'm more concerned about is that we, as a Legislature, you know sit on the bank of the river saying we should get in there and go swimming, but argue about