

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Abboud, followed by Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR ABOUD: Mr. President, colleagues, I support Senator Scofield's amendment. I feel that an additional group of...additional people to provide more input in this decision-making process I think would be helpful. It is going to be a big change in higher education in Nebraska, I feel, by the enactment of this bill, and, hopefully, with the additional amendments that will come following Senator Scofield's amendment, and I think the more individuals we can get involved in the decision-making process, the better off we will be, and by adding additional state senators, I think that that will provide a better base of support when legislation is needed further down the road. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you, and, Senator Abboud, may I take an opportunity to announce that you have friends and constituents in the north balcony, 40 fourth graders from Blumfield Elementary in Omaha with their teacher. Would you people please stand and be recognized. Thank you. We are pleased to have you with us this afternoon. Any other discussion on the Scofield amendment? Senator Scofield, would you care to close?

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Well, I will, only for purposes of clarification. I have asked the Page to pass around what this amendment does but I want you to be sure you know. All I do is expand the number of state senators involved from two to five, and add five members of the public at large appointed by the Governor in a geographically representative fashion. I think that will ensure that we are more likely to get some sense of ownership, both within the Legislature and that, obviously, there is a need for public understanding and support of this outside of this body, and I think that gives us an opportunity to draw on some expertise. Senator Withem is correct when he says that all you are going to have them do is just hire a contractor, anybody can do that, but I think given the complexity of the issues we are talking about here, and the potential statewide ramifications, that group will do more than just go in and interview, because I think they are going to have quite a bit to do in terms of directing this study throughout if it, in fact, is sufficient to address our needs. So, with that, I would ask you to accept the amendment which will expand the size of this group to thirteen. Thank you.