

of that funding level. Bowing to political realities yesterday, I supported the Lynch amendment; bowing even further, probably will support the Conway amendment on the level of funding, the \$20 million as opposed to the \$25 million. Procedurally, let me explain to the body what happened this morning and what was the...the meeting was all about, why it was called, what we attempted to accomplish and what I hope has been accomplished by the meeting. I was concerned yesterday afternoon as I walked up and noticed the, on the desk...

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Withem, please. (Gavel.) The house is not in order. Please.

SENATOR WITHEM: I was concerned as I walked up on the desk and noticed some eight different amendments, many of which attempted to accomplish the same thing only in slightly different fashion, and I thought it would be a waste of the body's time to slug it's way through each of those amendments individually, so I suggested anybody that had amendments filed meet along with the supporters of the bill this morning to talk about a manner in which we can get the issues addressed that they wished to have addressed, but not waste the body's time by going through four or five different approaches to accomplishing the same thing. So that is what we accomplished this morning. What this amendment of the...the Conway amendment does is it addresses the concerns that people had dealing with the Phase I concept. It eliminates it. It deals with the concerns people had of putting a...stating a minimum salary in the statute. It doesn't do that. That's going to be a local decision to be arrived at as to what the minimum salary is. What it does do though is it encourages local districts to have a salary in the first year not lower than 16,000, the second year not lower than 17,000 because they don't...aren't able to compete for the state dollars that are earmarked for teachers' salaries by doing that, by having a salary lower than that. I think that is probably an adequate compromise on this particular level and I am supportive of it. One of the things we also found in our discussions among senators is a degree of frustration, even among some of the supporters of this bill, that we aren't really doing a lot to improve the level of people that are in the teaching profession. I'm not saying that there is a lot of people in the teaching profession that aren't competent. I don't want to make that assumption, but I think there are many of us that thing we need to improve on all phases of education and that means improving the quality of teachers that we do have. I believe that having