

higher salaries will, for beginning teachers, will strengthen the ability of the education system to compete for those best and brightest young people out of our universities. I think that's an important factor. Senator Smith's remarks about needing to do other things to improve the level of teaching, I think are discussions we need to have. So far on this bill there really haven't been any suggestions made to change this bill that would improve the quality of instruction. The closest thing we had was an amendment by Senators Hefner and Smith that would have changed the probationary period from two years to five years. That would have done absolutely nothing to improve the quality of education. All it would have done would have been...made it more easy to discharge even good teachers the first four or five years when they're teaching.

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR WITHEM: But we haven't really addressed those, we haven't talked about those issues and, as Senator Smith indicated, I'd like to get into some of those over the interim. We're not going to do it on this bill. This bill, the session is too far along. Those ideas have not been brought forward yet, but there are some things out there. I guess, in my mind, I've been looking at the old teachers' stipend approach that was in 994. It is something that we ought to be looking at and thinking about, resurrecting perhaps, and maybe we can do that over the interim. At this point, I think this bill, with the Conway amendment, this bill will be in as about as good of shape as we are going to get it this session. I still think the original bill is a good bill, that the committee amendments were a good bill and that the Lynch amendments were so a good bill and I would prefer supporting them in any of those other levels of funding. But I guess political realities were getting nearer the session and the \$20 million figure that is here in the Conway amendment, although it would be my preference to see something other than that, feel like I am probably going to end up being supportive of the Conway amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Dierks, please.

SENATOR DIERKS: Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I made the statement at the hearing on LB 89 that I would be the first one on the bandwagon to support higher teachers' salaries if we could find, with that, a concomitant property tax relief, one that would go right along with those increased salaries. I