

please.

CLERK: 25 ayes, 3 nays to cease debate, Mr. President.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Debate ceases. For closing on advancement of the bill, Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I really don't have a lot to say on the advancement of the bill. It's been thoroughly discussed, I believe. To me my name is one that is up there. This is my bill, and we didn't do the maneuvering around just so I could be the one that carried the Kearney issue on my bill. The Kearney issue is being carried by the original introducers of LB 160. To me the most important part of the bill is the fact that the Legislature's committing itself to a very serious look at higher education. And, to me, the transfer of Kearney is making that commitment even stronger that we are going to be making some changes in our higher education governance coordination, and all of those sorts of factors. It's been a good discussion, I think, a very healthy discussion today. The issues have been brought out, they're understood by all parties. It's my hope that the bill would be advanced. I didn't see that Senator Kristensen, who was one of the original sponsors of 160, and beings that is such an important part of this bill now, I saw that his light was on, and if he'd like to share part of the closing, I would be happy to give him the remainder of the time.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Kristensen, about three and a half minutes.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Senator Withem, thank you very much. If we were creating an entirely new institution called the University of Nebraska at Kearney, this debate obviously would be much different. Senator Withem, through his guidance of the Education Committee, sees that we have a long road that we need to look at and go down that road. And we need to be decisive, and I think this body has been very decisive in deciding what direction, down the road, we want to go. And now what needs to be done is to study how we go down that road. I think that what's really important now is that we've decided to link this entire state, from one end to the other, with one university system. And we're not going to continue and begin a debate and a fight among institutions of having two competing university systems. And I commend you,