

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Wehrbein is announcing some guests in our north balcony, seven members of the Cottage Homemakers Group from Elmwood, Nebraska. Would you ladies please stand and be recognized. Thank you. We're glad you could be with us. Also, Senator Moore has some guests under the south balcony, Don and Cybil Beller from Omaha. Would you folks please take a bow. Thank you for visiting. Senator Hannibal, discussion on the Withem amendment, followed by Senators Scofield and Withem.

SENATOR HANNIBAL: Mr. Speaker and members, I rise to oppose the amendment and I have no quarrel with what has been said at all by any of the speakers before me. Senator Hall, Senator Warner and Senator Withem, I think they have all made very true and accurate statements. I think it's important that you understand that this amendment precludes us from making a policy decision later and I think that all three have admitted that that is correct and what Senator Warner has said is correct that it precludes us from making a statement, a policy decision later. All we are doing with this particular program is allowing us to have two separate areas so we can continue as a body to make a policy statement and that statement may come down in the form of LB 468 or in the form of LB 651 or in the form of no action whatsoever, in which case I believe it's accurate to say that 651 will essentially be the policy that we will have. I'm going to take it one step further and say that maybe it is time to make a policy decision on this issue because it will be a signal as to whether we do want to have our emphasis on scholarships to go towards...more towards private institutions or more towards public institutions. I have made that decision and I do recognize, I recognize all the good arguments that the private institutions do make and they make some excellent arguments and the fact that the private institutions play a vital role in our state higher education system is not insignificant. It is very significant. As a matter of fact, Mr. Oberg argues at length about the...about the fact that what if we didn't have our independence? Our state institutions, the university, state colleges and the technical community colleges would...the enrollment would vastly increase, I assume. And if it did so because every student that we have in our institution is subsidized by taxpayers' dollars, then our taxpayers' dollars would go much more towards our public institutions. So the private institutions do honestly play a very valuable role in our taxpayers' decisions, not just the role of education but in the taxpayers' decisions as well. However, on the other side of the coin, we are making a significant effort to educate