

SENATOR WITHEM: Yeah, Mr. President, members, I thought it would take a little more time. I have some handouts that the Pages will, hopefully, frantically be distributing to explain exactly what this whole thing does. If you remember last year the Legislature passed LB 940, which was a bill designed to deal with perennial, age-old battle of school district reorganization in Nebraska. Part of that bill required the county reorganization committees to meet, to reconstitute themselves, to meet, to look at situations in their county and formulate a plan for school district reorganization. They didn't have to act upon that plan, they don't have to carry it out, but we did ask them to take a look at it. This had not been done in some, oh, gosh, 20 or 30 years here in our state, maybe longer than that. It was an attempt to provide some assistance to the county reorganization committees. We asked the State Department of Education to provide technical assistance to those counties so that they would be able to have some statistical information available to them to make their decisions on. I have in my hand here a study, I did not duplicate it and pass it out because it's probably not a great deal of interest to anybody other than maybe Senator Morrissey, because it's a Johnson County survey, that is....But, if anybody is interested, this is the quality of work that they do. They project the likely population of students in the county, they look at the facilities in the school...various schools in the county, they really try to give as much statistical information to the county as they can to formulate a reorganization plan. In your handout, the last page of your handout you will see the counties that have entered into contracts with the Department of Education to do these studies. What we have found is that there is much more interest out there from these counties than we'd anticipated. They are genuinely taking this seriously. As a matter of fact, we are kind of victims of our own success, that the county committees are actually taking their jobs very seriously. They are looking at...want more and more information about whether they should keep schools open, whether they should create reorganization plans, what those plans should look like, and the department just does not have the resources to continue those. What we have is before you now is what I think a very modest, very modest request to appropriate more dollars to fund these programs, it's a \$30,000 request this year; \$15,000 request the next year. It is a one-time appropriation, by the time that this appropriation is used the plans will have been completed and the job will be done. I'd answer any questions that anybody