

understand there is no problem with this amendment, but you're opposing it. I didn't quite understand why you're opposing this particular amendment. I understand your position on the textbook loan program, but...

SENATOR HANNIBAL: The amendment is a clean up to an amendment.

SENATOR WITHEM: And you don't want it cleaned up.

SENATOR HANNIBAL: Technically all...we have our amendment drafted to the original amendment. So, if this amendment passes, we'll just draft the amendment to this amendment. It's no big thing.

SENATOR WITHEM: Okay, okay. I would rise in support of Senator Hall's amendment, because I think it is a cleanup amendment and needs to take place. Very briefly, because Senator Hannibal spoke to the general issue of the textbook loan program, I'd just like to, because I may not be here later in the afternoon when this is debated in earnest, just like to make my position on this clear. As Chair of the Education Committee and as an individual who has consistently, as a member of this body and prior to my involvement in this body, have been supportive of improvements in the area of public education, I'd like to comment that I am supportive of Senator Hall's efforts in this area. Some people may think that is a contradiction, and unfortunately in our state the history of support to students who attend private schools has become one of those many, many lines we draw on the floor that somehow divides the good guys from the bad guys. I think it's one of those reasons that we, as a state, have such an abysmally poor record of making improvements in the area of education. We're more interested in drawing lines and shutting some people out and helping others than we are in improving education for students in the state. The private schools in our state make an enormous contribution to the education of young people. What we need to be doing as policy-makers that are interested in improving education, I think, is drawing more people into the circle of those that are supporting the improvements of education. I think this program, the textbook loan program is not a big program. I don't have fears that it's going to escalate into something that is going to be depriving the public schools of any support. The fact that we spend a billion dollars in this state to educate people in public schools, that's property tax dollars and state income tax dollars, and sales tax dollars, indicates that appropriating