

SENATOR ROGERS: I really haven't been able to follow you this morning. But would you just in maybe a minute, why are you so afraid of this program? It's been declared constitutional, it isn't that many dollars, there has to be some underlying factor that you've been stating that I don't understand.

SENATOR HANNIBAL: Senator Rogers, no, there is not any other agenda. I think I've stated on the floor before that my family, it's fairly...my family do not attend private schools, but my one daughter did, so I would have every reason in the world to support this bill, if it were for an ulterior motive. The only issue that I am trying to present to you now is that when we discuss the issue on General File I believe very few of us really realized what it was that we were deciding. If we now, after having I hope some very good discussion, make a policy decision that we want to go ahead and have public dollars fund private education, then so be it. I won't be uncomfortable with that, but I think it's in...I will not be supporting it because I think our first priority is to public education, both at the elementary-secondary schools and at postsecondary education schools, such as we got involved with the SSIG money. I just feel our first priority is there, and that if we want to go away from that priority, I just want to make sure that everybody on the floor, when they vote on it, says yes, we do want to go away from that as opposed to what I think happened on General File where I don't think people made that conscious decision.

SENATOR ROGERS: Well, I guess the other comment I would have, I mean a lot of times we talk about dollars in this body. I think if we'd realize the money that the private schools save, you talk about supporting the public schools with public tax dollars, I have no qualms with that either. I mean I support the public schools in my district. But I think as long as it is constitutional, and you talk about a few dollars, basically if you want to support the public schools with tax dollars, I think in the end, Senator Hannibal, you'll probably save a little money because you're going to keep some of these schools open a little longer. So, if that is your argument, that you only want your state tax dollar to go to public schools, you might actually save a few dollars in the long run. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Hall, followed by Senator Schimek and Senator Warner.