

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Lynch. I'm sorry, there are another one or two lights. I won't recognize it at this time, but thank you. A couple of lights just went off. Senator Lynch, we are to the point where we're ready to close. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, you know Senator Lamb just indicated what would happen if you voted down the committee amendments. I don't know who...frankly, Senator Lamb, I don't know who will be coming back with what you described as fairer amendments. I have spent considerable hours, as you know and as you have, working on this issue in the last three years. I have been to all parts of the state. I visited with everybody and anybody I could about the issue. I have listened to input. I have proposed things and been called names for proposing things. I have in good faith attempted to compromise and I have had people on both sides of the issue chastising me across the state. Frankly, Senator Lamb, if this amendment, committee amendment is not adopted, I do not know where the other fairer amendments will be coming from. That is not necessarily a threat, I don't mean to be threatening you or members of the body, but I think we do need to clarify that if there are people in the Legislature that think that there is...that this is kind of an opening bid in an auction and we reject this one that there are several other proposals yet to come. There really aren't. That we as a Legislature have discussed, debated, argued, fought over the question of school reorganization, what you have before you is a bill that will accomplish what Class I residents have told us year in and year out they want. They want to keep their schools open. We have the power of a Legislature to do what every other legislature in the nation has done, practically speaking, and that is for school district reorganization. We could just as easily be here on the floor today talking about mandatory school district reorganization and my guess is the votes wouldn't have been that much different on the Lamb amendment, on that proposal, than they would have been on the Lamb amendment, but it is my preference not to do that. I have changed over the last three years to the point where there are those very sincere individuals in this state who do want to keep their schools open for education purposes. Look around you. You don't see those folks here today. You don't see those folks here opposed to this bill. There were times, if this were mandatory school district reorganization, you'd probably have these balconies full of people. They are not here. The people that you are