

promoting some creative ideas. I have a bill before the Education Committee that is trying to get schools to be innovative in ways of providing coordination between postsecondary and secondary education in the state. That bill is in the Education Committee, probably is not a bill that I'm going to push hard this year but I think it's something that we need to be looking at for the future. But I think that one of the main problems that we have with education in this state is accessibility and accessability for all of the citizens of this state. And I think when we do the things like restructuring and we come up with new and creative ideas of getting the information out to the students all across the state, that's what we need to promote. We need to promote those kind of creative ideas so that all of the students in this state can have an equal opportunity for education. With that, I would simply urge the body to advance this bill because I think it's an important concept that we need to have in this state. Thank you.

PRESIDENT NICHOL PRESIDING

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Withem, would you like to close on the advancement of the bill?

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Mr. Speaker and members of the body, we have had a good discussion on the bill and I appreciate that fact that we spend a lot of time in the Education Committee and on the floor of the Legislature on education issues dealing with noneducation issues, issues of structure, issues of governance, issue of financing. This is a bill that deals with the real nitty gritty of whether our kids are getting the type of education that they deserve. I very much appreciate the way Senator Dierks characterized a lot of our work on the committee and what this bill does, because it does, in fact, issue a challenge to the school community to begin improving. We have a tremendous problem, I think, in this state in that we in some ways are spoiled by our successes in education. We're treated every few months to headlines about Nebraska students doing well on standardized tests, that our dropout rates are low. We've got to remember that's compared to an overall system that the very conservative Republican administration in Washington of President Bush and former Secretary of Education Bennett and current Secretary of Education Cavazos are convinced is a failing system, a system that needs some improvement, definitely needs some changes. In comparison with that system, yeah, we do