

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Landis.

SENATOR LANDIS: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, Becky Veak works in my office. She's the Committee Clerk for the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee. And about 1:15 today got a phone call in my office, and they asked if I was a supporter of 1059, and she said, yes, that I was a sponsor of the measure. And the anonymous caller indicated that with that act I had lost, forever, the support of this particular constituent and the phone slammed down and that was the end of the conversation. I suppose there is an obligation to explain why I would vote for a bill that I know will raise taxes in my home district and probably in greater measure than the property tax relief that those constituents will receive. I first do it because they will receive a certain amount of property tax relief, and for that I'm grateful. For the extra costs which they bear, and which they will not receive in the form of property tax reductions, I would give as my rationale this language from Article VII of the Nebraska Constitution. Section 1 of Article VII says, "The Legislature shall provide for the free instruction in the common schools of this state of all persons between the ages of 5 and 21 years." That's a simple sentence, and I'd like to read it again. "The Legislature shall provide for the free instruction in the common schools of this state of all persons between the ages of 5 and 21 years." It doesn't say the local school board, it doesn't say a particular group of people, it says basically that we are all in the joint venture of providing the kids of this state a good public education, and that that obligation rests squarely and first with this body. You cannot go through the checkered history of Nebraska school finance without coming to the conclusion that there are kids in this state who did not receive education of the first quality because of the areas that they come from. It's not because it's not wished for, or hoped for, but because the wealth of the district is such that they are just not capable of providing it. And I know that first and foremost we should look to those parents for that kind of support, and we always have traditionally, because we have that local control outlook. But, if you check the State Constitution, that's not where the obligation begins nor ends. It begins here. It begins with that constitutional principle that says, this is our obligation. In fact, it is exactly the failure of states to make a living, breathing reality of those kinds of promises that have brought states before the bar to justify and explain their school financing system, and which, on