

CLERK: 25 ayes, 0 nays to cease debate, Mr. President.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Debate ceases. Senator Withem, would you care to close?

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes. Let me begin the closing and then I'll pass it on to Senator Moore. It's been a good debate today, good discussion. This, by no means, ends the discussion. I would urge people between now and Select File to bring your issues that have come up on the floor down to us and we'll continue to wrestle through with them. Please don't wait until Select File. If you have amendments you want to offer, I'd urge you to print them in the Journal, let us all take a look at them, because this is a complicated matter and it is a controversial matter. But the time is here to do something in the area of funding schools. This bill does two things, basically. It shifts from overreliance on property tax to other methods of funding education, using the sales and income tax. Secondly, it provides for a different distribution formula to provide greater equity of funding for students. It does those two things. Simplistically, that's what the bill does. To do it right it gets into a whole list of complexities, but that is basically what it does. Let me tell you what the bill does not do. The bill does not right a property tax system that has been crumbling for the last 20 years. It does not address what should be on the property tax rolls and what should not be. We need to address that, this bill is not strong enough to carry that burden, does not purport to, and should not be expected to, nor does it right the wrongs of the sales tax system, or right the wrongs of the income tax system, nor should it. What it does is it goes to the traditional methods of funding state government, the sales tax and the income tax. If you see inequities in the way that's done, that's not the fault of this bill, that's the fault of our sales tax system, that's the fault of our income tax system. Again, this bill should not be expected to right those. What this bill should be expected to do is provide a fairer basis of educating children in our state by providing a fairer distribution of funds, and it should get away from our overreliance on property tax to fund education. I think the bill does those two things admirably. Appreciate the discussion and the debate today. If Senator Moore does not do so, I'm going to ask for...that we do a call of the house and a roll call vote in regular order prior to taking the vote on this bill. With that, I give the remainder of the closing time to Senator Moore.