

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Mr. President, members of the body. First of all, I almost hit my light for a point of personal privilege and chose not to interrupt Senator McFarland. But I would like to say I, personally, take offense at his remarks that somehow Senator Warner, Senator Withem and the Speaker have injected fear into the education community and have not...somehow have put a chilling effect on people, and that's the reason that people are not coming forward to speak on this bill. I certainly have not seen any reluctance by people on any side of this issue to come forward. And I just object to that particular statement. What you've heard so far here is what you always hear on any proposal for change. As Senator Moore said, only a wet baby seems to like change. What you see put forward is a group of worst case scenarios, worst case scenarios and what if's, you know, what if, what if, what if, what if they start lobbying on their own? Well, we already know that they are. What if they become provincial? What if the Governor doesn't appoint good people to these boards? You know, what if the people decide that they don't want to have any of these people appointed, that they want to have them all elected? What if the people vote this down? A whole series of what if's coupled with nit-picking concerns, and they're also the sort of things, again, Senator Warner said it well yesterday, people don't like this proposal because it shakes up their little univ...he didn't say that, I said that today, it shakes up their own little universes and makes it difficult for them to continue to operate with the status quo. People who benefit from the status quo never want to see change in the status quo. But they aren't coming forward with honest explanations. They are coming forward with nit-picking sort of concerns, as soon as that one nit-picking concern is answered, either proven to be false or we make adjustments in the legislation to provide for that, they then move onward...onto another nit-picking change. And, in many cases, they're in a situation where they are then criticizing the new change that was being made to accommodate them. That's the type of dishonest opposition that always happens when there is major change, it shakes up persons individual fiefdoms and their own little universe, but it's always there. We need to, I think, as a Legislature to address this issue we need to lift ourselves out of that, and we need to ask ourselves is the current system delivering all that it can to Nebraskans for the money that they are putting into higher education? If you think, yes, it is, if you think having the current system that we have where nobody can enforce coordination decisions, nobody can eliminate duplication, nobody