

CLERK: 14 ayes, 17 nays to cease debate, Madam President.

SENATOR LABEDZ: Debate has not ceased. Senator McFarland.

SENATOR MCFARLAND: Thank you, Madam President. This amendment has raised an issue that has always troubled me and it is something we have discussed in the Education Committee. Senator Hefner's amendment, as I understand it, would count parochial students who attend public schools on a part-time basis in the distribution formula. I can see the basis for it but I really think a better solution to it would be count all of the students who are of school-age eligibility in the distribution formula whether they attend public, private, or parochial schools. My general view on this whole issue has been that everyone, regardless of where they send their children to school, or regardless of whether they have children or not, or whether they are senior citizens, or whether they are a young couple without any children, or whether they are single people, or whatever, all of us have an obligation to support the public school system. The question for me is not giving tax credits to parochial schools necessarily or tax credits to private...to parents who have sent students to private schools or parochial schools, the question for me is, what is the fairness of the distribution of state aid? Right now in the distribution of state aid, we are distributing that on a proportional basis based upon the number of students attending public schools. That, to me, seems an unfair method of allocating the distribution of state aid funds. What we should be doing is distributing it on the total number of students within the school district because everyone is paying, in the district, paying a tax burden proportionate to pay for public education for all of those students, and so that state aid should be distributed accordingly in my view. I had a bill like this in the Education Committee. I don't recall whether we advanced it out or not. It generated some debate, and as I recall in the Education Committee, there was a grudging acceptance of the philosophy of it. My view is that if you really want to count and distribute state aid on a proportionate basis, don't just count the students in the public schools because then you are penalizing the whole district and all the taxpayers of that district just because some parents choose to send their students to private or parochial school, and I think they have that legitimate right. What I do say, however, is in fairness to the taxpayers of that district, then distribute state aid