

could have had a very, very tight lid in terms of numbers, a 2 percent lid, a 1 percent lid, a zero percent lid, and then began exempting specific things out from under it. We chose not to do that, to start the laundry list, because it is something that is difficult to stop after you start it. As an example, in here yesterday, Lincoln Public Schools came in with three exemptions from the lid. We adopted two of them and now here they are back for one more today, so it is a good indication of how the process can develop if you are not careful. What the commission did was we looked at the historical growth of school district budgets over the past five years, and thought, what is a realistic number, and we came up with the 4 to 6 1/2 percent because...because historically the growth of school district budgets has been right in at the 5 percent category for the past five years. Within that 5 percent, they have paid their teachers' raises, they have picked up the cost of increased health care, which in many cases gets tied in with a percentage of the...reported as a percentage of the salary increase anyway, I think; at least, that has been my experience back in my home town. They have been able to keep this particular...their spending within this 5 percent range, even with increased utility costs, even with all of these other increases. We came up with what we thought was a realistic number and did not want to do a lot of exclusions. Now we did do some exclusions yesterday because they were, in many ways, cases, specific types of amendments. The special ed growth is not something that is experienced uniformly around the state. It tends to get concentrated in specific districts and Lincoln is one of those where families that have children with special needs move into Lincoln specifically because of the special ed program. The one on the contract, the multiyear contract, school districts that have already signed the contracts for future years, we made that exception. But to make a blanket exception, like health care costs from the lid, really, this would be the one that would break the dam, I think, and there would, in effect, be no budget limitation if this were to be adopted. So I would urge you not to support it.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Wesely, would you like to close on your amendment?

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Yes, Mr. President, I didn't want to take a lot of time on this. I appreciate Senator Withem's concern. He has a legitimate point. I am really trying to raise, again, an issue of the limitation, its impact, that