

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Chambers, please, followed by Senator Moore.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman, I think with those three Chambers amendments this is a good bill now and I think we definitely ought to vote to advance it.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Moore, please.

SENATOR MOORE: No.

PRESIDENT: Senator Scofield, please.

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Mr. President, I still don't have a real good idea of whether we've actually got the votes we need to advance this. And I wanted to just make one other point that I don't know if it will have any impact on people who still have reservations about this. But I mentioned, I think, once before when we were debating this bill that I had the opportunity to speak to a group of state legislators in Montana on higher education issues, this fall. And it was...it seemed to me to be the consensus of the legislators from those states that higher ed was not responding in their states to their desires to serve, all of them happened to be rural states. And there also seemed to be not an open but an implied threat there that the public simply wasn't going to stand for things to just continue as usual. I think this relates a little bit to Senator Warner's earlier comments about the need for using what resources we have carefully, and the kinds of, frankly, competition that we have when we see before our committee all kinds of needs that grow out of an aging population, growing health care needs, growing needs for elementary and secondary cutbacks in all kinds of federal programs that inevitably come to rest at the feet of either the state or local taxpayer. And, so even as underfunded, sometimes, as higher ed has felt like it's been, and in some areas it definitely has been, I think the scenario for the future is not one that means that if we weather out this current period that things are going to get better. If anything, I think the resources are going to get more and more strained. And so I think it's very important that we put this mechanism into place, so that we can use what we have out there very carefully, and that we make the public feel like what they're investing in higher education in this state is well spent, and so that there is a sense across the state that it is