

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Scofield, on the Conway amendment, followed by Senator Beck.

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Mr. President and members, I have to confess when I read the language of Senator Warner's amendment here that the same thought crossed my mind, as apparently crossed Senator Conway's. And I assumed, probably because of the way...the unique way we fund technical community colleges with a blend of property tax money and state aid money, that that is probably why it wasn't in there. But that's not to say it shouldn't be, if in fact this can pass the test that Senator Warner laid out in his remarks. I would not vote for the Conway amendment today, but it does seem to me that, given the numbers of entities that we have out there, and there are competing interests, quite frankly, between community colleges and state colleges and the university, we've all seen them probably in our own districts, I happen to be fairly pleased with the kind of coordination and cooperation that I have seen between Western Nebraska Community College and Chadron State. I think they're doing a pretty good job. But there are little tensions there once in a while. And I suspect there are similar tensions throughout the state, and yet I think there is a great need for this system to be treated as an important entity of the higher education system as a whole. They shouldn't be left out. They shouldn't be ignored. They should be nurtured. I have thought from time to time it might be wise to look at their role and mission and see if the terms "vocational education" don't mean different things today than they did when we created that system. I think they do. And I think there is an important role for those entities to play. Again, I keep bringing up the word "access", and, frankly, those institutions give access that other institutions don't give, and I think it's important that when we start to recognize that, and there is a group, as a matter of fact, out there working on recommendations for vocational education, I don't know exactly what they're going to tell us, what they're going to bring in, but I'll bet you they talk about the technical community college system as being a very important piece in the entire scheme of higher education, I think we should think very seriously about involving that system in with any kind of coordination we do. And so I would be inclined, at some point if we can do it, to include that system in this amended language. Not today I don't think, until we answer those questions, but I think that's a worthwhile direction to pursue. I'm not sure that I'm all that crazy about the option that Senator Warner is offering here, for different