

answer them.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Nelson. Senator Kristensen, do you wish to debate this amendment? Okay. I'll now recognize Senator Withem, followed by Senator Moore, and Senator Warner. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Madam Chair, members of the body. I have real concerns about a bill passed by this Legislature to create the education centers in this particular year. I think it sends an incredibly bad signal to this new commission. We have established the commission constitutionally with the authority to approve or disapprove programs. We, as the Legislature, have in effect said this...the floor of this Legislature is not the appropriate place to make these decisions. The appropriate place to make these decisions is within the coordinating commission. For us, in the very year that that would pass, after that passed, to violate that and come in and establish education centers legislatively I think would be the wrong signal about how seriously we're taking the coordinating commission. That being said, I don't have strong feelings on whether or not, in some parts of the state, the concept of an education center is needed. It's just those decisions ought not be made in this Legislature. I recognize there are people in Scottsbluff, and in Grand Island, and in North Platte, and in Norfolk that worked very hard on this concept. And while they may not, in a philosophical sense, have problems with the coordinating commission, their ob...there's another road block that's been put in their way that wasn't there when they started. I think what Senator Nelson is proposing would be...is a workable compromise on this issue. That the decision on approval or disapproval of education centers be in the hands of the coordinating commission, that they take a little bit longer, but it would still be one of the first things that they do. Now I recognize we've also told them statewide plan is one of the first things they need to do. But as far as program review, that this be the first thing that they look at, I have no problem doing that. I think that that is a worthwhile amendment. I'm hopeful, I'm hopeful that that will satisfy the need of this Legislature to deal with the education centers issue, that by giving firm direction to the coordinating Commission to approve or disapprove those programs by June 30th, I believe it is, that will be the manner in which this Legislature will deal with the education issue. So with that understanding and at least my intent in supporting this