

reasons. I see the state's responsibility, first and foremost, to quality public education, and if we were doing that adequately, I would not be so bothered by this. Even with 1059, we are not high in terms of ranks in the amount of support that we give to public education. We have a long way to go and I don't think we have a lot of extra dollars to go beyond that commitment that we have as a state. I'm also concerned, too, when I look at those states who have opened these doors where it has occurred that public schools have, after a period of time, become the schools where children of low income go to and those that are anything else go to private school. And I don't think that's good policy for us to encourage. The other thing that I'm having trouble with this, this is a year of economic restraint and I have had to say no to statewide vaccinations for children; no to statewide mammography testing for women; no to coordinated services in bills of my own for families of children with disabilities. I cannot see how I can say yes to \$1.8 million for this particular effort. I appreciate that there are those who say it really isn't \$1.8 million, but that's becoming a very common phrase regarding a lot of A bills this year, is that it's being overstated. And perhaps they are but perhaps they are for a good reason and that is that we need to be realistic about what the potential or maximum cost of any bill is going to be. I think the other factor here is that it's most likely going to grow, not decrease or stay the same, that that amount of money that we're talking about on this issue is going to increase, both for those families who have children in public schools as well as private school, will find it more and more something that they want to use. And, for that reason, I must oppose the amendment in the form that it is. I do like... Senator Schellpeper said he thinks we ought to look at this whole issue again in light of what's being proposed with lottery monies being earmarked for education. It seems to me to make a lot more sense to look at those dollars going for improving the quality of education for all children, regardless of what environments they're in. So I will be looking for that as a better avenue for supporting education in all environments than this particular amendment.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Rasmussen. Before I recognize the next speaker, I would like to call your attention again to the south balcony. First of all, special guests of Senator Byars today are 13 students from Paddock-Lane in Beatrice and their teachers. Would you rise and be recognized and welcomed to the Chambers. Okay, and also Senator Johnson,