

increased pay for teachers throughout the state, but we will put a sunset on it so in two years we are going to reexamine what this \$20 million has accomplished. And I think that is really the crux of the amendment that Senator Withem is offering here today; that is when we originally appropriated the money, I think there was so much disappointment among teachers throughout the state that they did not get the entire \$150 million, that it was whittled down to \$20 million, that we overlooked really the crucial point of the bill and that is, what is the purpose of that bill? Will the bill attract more teachers into the profession? More important, will the bill attract more good teachers into the profession? Will we have better graduation rates among our students throughout the state? Will the SAT and ACT college entrance exams go up as a result of this particular proposal? And will, most important, will we have teachers less likely to leave the profession that are good teachers because of this additional money that we are putting into the educational system? These are a number of the questions that were asked two years ago. They sent out, I guess, a justification, a rather nice brochure, on the bill, and they focus in on a number of important issues; first, that the ACT score comparison, that we are right up there at the top of the nation. We are pretty much at the top of the nation when this bill was originally put in, but that is still nice. Graduation rates are still high. Drop-out rates are some of the lowest in the nation, and some of the lowest in the Midwest, and I think that is important. I think we should all be proud of our educational system, and these facts and figures really say a lot about the good educational quality that we have in the State of Nebraska, and I am proud of the work that the teachers do throughout this state in educating our children. But the question is, did LB 89 of two years ago accomplish this? Did it have any impact, whatsoever, in keeping those graduation rates high? Of keeping those ACT scores high? Of keeping the drop-out rates low? Those are the issues that we need to address, and I think that two years ago we were taking in a bold new approach in funding of local educational systems. Up until that time in our entire history of the state, over 100 years, we had never ever...

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR ABBODD: ...funded education in that particular manner. It had always been through state aid to our local school board, and in that approach two years ago, we said we are going to take that step of bypassing the administrative cost, of bypassing