

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Robinson. Senator Rasmussen.

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: Yes, Madam President, this is a difficult issue for me, because I've always been a very strong supporter of the deseg. plan. And I don't want the choice option to sabotage that program in any way, shape, or form. Perhaps in retrospect a better solution might have been to exempt all the metropolitan schools in the Omaha area from the choice plan, so that we wouldn't have put the desegregation plan in Omaha Public Schools at risk. One of the things I've learned, though, is that this whole process is quite confusing. It's hard to sort out what's fair and what isn't fair. But I went through all the applications of those that...not all of them, but most of the applications of those that are now attending 66 under the tuition approach. And I think the screening process that the district did use to try and make sure that people were not trying to go to 66 for the sole purpose of avoiding the deseg. plan has been pretty effective. And as I look at those applications, I see people from various income brackets, and I see people who made decisions for various reasons about what would be the best educational opportunity for their child. And I think that has been the intent of the choice option, is to encourage people to examine what would be best for their child, not what system is better than another system, but what is best for their child, and to have the opportunity to match up their child's needs with the educational system. And so, for that reason, I think, because this is a finite number, because 66 is no longer going to allow any tuition, and because the parents did appear to choose on the basis of good educational opportunities and best opportunities for their kids, that I would urge you not to support the proposal to bring this back. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Rasmussen. Senator Chambers, followed by Senator Withem.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Madam President and members of the Legislature, I want to get some things into the record, and I'm going to vote to return the bill. First of all, for Senator Horgan, Senator Robinson and Senator Rasmussen, these...the families that we're talking about are getting something through the choice bill that was not bargained for when they originally sent their children to District 66. They agreed to pay tuition.