

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Crosby. The speaking order is now Senator Nelson, Hefner, Horgan, Robinson, and Withem. Senator Nelson.

SENATOR NELSON: Madam President, I, too, will probably be supporting Senator Withem's amendment. This has been one of the problems and concerns of mine all along as this proposal and, as most of you know, I'm not very happy about just automatically putting out, so to speak, millions of dollars that we do not actually have available or that we have to cut out of many, many other programs in our state budget and...or to dig into our reserve. I think it's the responsibility of Senator Withem, myself. I've been on Education Committee I think as long or longer than anyone in this body right now and there are so many, many areas that we need to work on and to stress. The idea of our funding for education in the State of Nebraska ultimately is for the good of our students and I'm afraid that too many of us are blindly passing out 15, 20 million dollars, be it 10 million dollars, whatever it is, without asking for any accountability or stopping to ourselves and saying, what are we doing for the student, how are we improving our schools, what does this do to assure that every student starting school is ready for school, Senator Rasmussen's concerns about the disabilities, what is this doing for tutors for children in need, or competence in core subjects, or science and math? We only have 20 percent of our teachers that are even trained in science and math, and many, many more of them are teaching that. We should be up to the 50 percent. What are we doing for retraining teachers? We are not addressing that. What are we doing to improve the difference, to encourage teachers on core subjects, or the helping the teachers that are teaching in dangerous situations or challenging settings? We need to review all of that. This is my biggest concern and for that reason I may or may not be supporting this bill depending on what amendments do follow. I think the Legislature is being blindly led into just, well, we'll simply throw out the money that we should be expending for any number of education programs and I have been a supporter and I still am in education and, without any accountability, what is this doing for our students, what is this doing for our local school? And the Legislature's being led to believe, well, we're throwing out 15 or 20 million dollars so it automatically has to improve our education, and that's a question that I want to ask all of you. So Senator Withem has turned on a number of the same subjects that I would--participation in staff development,