

salaries were too low; that we were paying them at 40...the 41st state and yet our performance was far and exceedingly above that, and that we ought to increase teachers' salaries because they were too low, and that was the basis of the original bill and we put 20 million dollars into it. Two years later now we're back and we're saying, all right, we still believe teachers' salaries are too low, but we've got some financial crisis in the state and we can't afford 20 million dollars, so we slash it by 25 percent. I don't think there's any other department that's being asked to take that type of a cut. So for us to now say, stand up and say, well, indeed, what we're going to do is we're going to cut them down a little bit more, put 10 million into general salary increases and 5 into merit, I think is putting...pouring a little bit of sauce into the wound and I don't think it's fair and I think, you know, we're talking about no accountability in these dollars. Well, I think we get a lot of accountability in these dollars and that's what, and, number one, that's what school boards are for, and we give this money to the local school boards and districts and we say, you distribute the money out, you determine with your local teachers how you want to distribute it out; if you want to do it on longevity, that's fine, do it on longevity; if you want to pay new teachers more, you do that. We're allowing the local school districts that ability to have the determination, those people who are best able to ask for accountability. So there's a lot of accountability in these dollars and for us to say that there is no accountability I think is erroneous at best. I think there's also some other things that have been said, you know, we need to talk about getting teachers retrained and encourage teachers in challenging areas, and we can't be blindly led into no accountability. I visited a couple of schools and Senator Chizek and I visited a school that borders our districts and went and read to the students, and when we were done, the teacher took me into her classroom and she was...she said, I want to show you what I did with my LB 91 money, and she'd built a puppet theatre for her fourth grade classroom, and she'd purchased a rocking chair, and she bought some books that she wanted for her classroom, and she took a course at UNO. So she got retrained and she spent the money on kids. Now not all the teachers did that. Some of the teachers paid bills with the money, but a lot of teachers invested in their own education, a lot of teachers invested in the schools and the kids and they used the money for those purposes, and these dollars are well spent. They're important dollars. They're going to encourage new people to go into education. They're going to encourage