

plan. I know that there are a lot of people who have had an indication that they wanted to speak, so rather than use all of my time, I am going to share some of my time with Senator Rasmussen.

SENATOR RASMUSSEN: Thank you, Senator Withem. I, too, rise in opposition to the Hefner amendment. I think that we made an agreement that we would still say that the bulk of the money this year would go to... in the same format that we had done before and that any additional money would then begin in a systematic way to address performance base. I think that it is really important to recognize a couple of factors. One is there has been a lot of talk about improving education. But, the teachers in this state have done a remarkable job for relatively low pay compared to other states and compared to other professions. We rank very high in terms of national standardized test scores and we rank very high in terms of percentage of graduates. They have done a terrific job. Now that doesn't mean that there aren't some bad teachers out there and that doesn't mean that we can't get better. We can. I think what Senator Withem has offered is a beginning step towards looking at outcomes and accountability in terms of the pay. But right now I think what we are trying to say with the \$15 million is the teaching profession should be one of the most valued professions in our society. From the teachers come all other professions. For that reason, it ought to be valued in the kind of pay scale that we have for them. I don't see this as a bonus, I see this as payback for all the terrific work they already have done and it is a continued step towards getting that base pay to a valued position in our society. For that reason, I would oppose the Hefner amendment and hope that you would stay with what we have with the Withem amendment.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Rasmussen. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Madam President, I was given forty seconds by Senator Horgan and I chose not to use it because there wasn't enough time, but he may have had something he wanted to say in the last forty seconds so I would like to grant my first forty seconds to Senator Horgan if he would like to use those.

SENATOR HORGAN: Would you like me to call the question, Dave? No, thank you.