

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Madam President and members of the body, I have not spoken on the issue, in fact I haven't spoken on the floor very much at all recently. In fact it has been so bad I have got cobwebs, I think, in my mouth so I have to, if I spit a little bit, it is just getting the saliva back in. There are a couple of things that come to mind about some of the comments that have been made. I would like to just kind of just refocus a little bit. First of all, Senator Horgan was absolutely correct. When the Appropriation Committee asked agencies to reduce, we didn't get a very good response from them. Some of the agencies came back and said, yes, in the budget crisis we would be willing to reduce here and here and there, and gave us really precise things, and really worked well with us. But most of the agencies basically said, we don't know what we are going to do, we are not going to give... we don't know where we are going to cut and, in essence, they just said, we don't want to cut. The teachers didn't do that and probably they should have. The teachers, for the most part, said we understand it is a tight budgetary year, we understand that we deserve \$20 million, we deserve a \$100 million, but we are willing to give up, because we understand the whole picture, \$5 million. That was more than anybody in the State of Nebraska, to my knowledge, has done as a group that did not have to do so. They did not have to do so, but they did so, on their own voluntarily. What this particular amendment does, and, Senator Hefner, you are correct, it does not reduce the total amount at all. It is still \$15 million. You are absolutely correct and I sympathize with the articles that came out saying that you are taking 5 million away because it is not, in theory it is not. But what the amendment does is reduce totally that which is going to go to the teachers really by \$10 million. And then what it will do is put \$5 million in performance base this year and quite honestly \$5 million is not really enough to do that. I think it would be more of a discouragement right now than any encouragement could hope to offer. Even Senator Withem's amendment we agreed to that if we go up to \$20 million the next \$5 million goes in performance base that \$5 million is not going to do much either. It is going to take a lot, lot more. Hopefully, it will act as an incentive to put more in so we can have more on the income side and also more on the performance base side. But beyond all of that, there are a couple of things I think people don't understand about the teaching profession. There are no incentives in teaching to my knowledge, with exception of one. Simply a sincere desire to