

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Bernard-Stevens.

CLERK: AM3538, Senator.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you. Madam President, members of the body, and, Mr. Clerk, you don't need to apologize. With a hyphenated name I get called so many different names it's... I respond to a lot, and Bernard-Stevenson is closer than some of the other ones, so that's perfectly all right. The amendment that we have, that the body has before it is an amendment I'm sure you've been lobbied quite strongly maybe in the last couple of hours or the last couple of days, and it refers to a bill actually introduced by Senator Withem, LB 1123, that went to the Revenue Committee and it was a bill that would have funded the teacher incentive or they help fund with use of Highway Trust Fund monies. That is in essence the nature of the amendment that we have before us and so I want to alert the body that if you were interested in that amendment and/or you had taken a position and want to have a position taken on the amendment, that is what is before the body at this particular time. I want to make just a couple of preliminary remarks on the amendment itself. The Legislature, over the past few years, has made many policy decisions, some in the highway area and some in education. Those decisions we've made on, and policy determinations we've made in the highway area and infrastructure have been very, very important because it is of valuable importance to the state that we have a working, usable infrastructure, particularly when we look at roads, county roads, bridges and highways. Any culture, any society, any economic society has to have a valuable transportation system, working transportation system in order for that economic and that culture and that lifestyle to exist. No one today is arguing that. No one today is going to try to threaten that. To threaten that would be a mistake. We have made policy determinations also in the field of education. One of the things the Legislature fought very hard for in 1989 was the... what was termed as the HELP bill and we funded it at \$20 million, and I want to try to review that just a little bit. Each year was \$20 million. The Legislature has often talked, in education terms, in regards to what needs to be done to improve our education system? We have talked its failures of education and where those failures are. We have talked about restructuring, we have talked about a need to bring the level of our students up in competitive areas in the math and the