

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: On the amendment.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: I do want to speak on the Robinson amendment, and, in fact, what Senator Robinson has done via his amendment is he has returned the focus of the debate back away from the amendment that Senator Bernard-Stevens is offering, back to Senator Ashford's original bill, and if you vote for it, as I understand, Senator Robinson, and just nod your head yes or no, I can probably hear it from here if you do, just kidding, just kidding. Just not your head yes or no, what your amendment does, in essence, if it is successful, then we will have a bill that is only the teacher salary issue and we will do away with...okay, fine, thank you very much. Thank you very much. You were right, I was not listening. You are correct. I would certainly oppose this amendment, and it is unusual for me to say that because a lot of people probably think there is not many school-spending program that I haven't liked. And it is not that I don't like the wards of the courts program. It is just difficult for me to understand the justification of saying to school districts, you have a legal obligation to educate every child that moves into your district, but in this one particular case when they move into the district, because they are wards of the court, the state then jumps in and pays those costs. I guess that was the argument Senator Ashford focused on in the committee hearing and that is the reason I switched my position and became supportive of this. We don't, because we passed LB 775 and because a lot of people have moved into Lexington, we don't say we will pay the tuition of all of those people that moved into Lexington because of LB 775. Nobody has even dreamed of saying that. What we have done is we passed LB 1059 which says we are going to share, as a state, in the cost of elementary-secondary education. At this point, it is right around the 40 percent level that we are going to be sharing in the cost of education, and I have yet to be convinced that the wards of the court situation is different. They are kids. They live in a school district. The school district has an obligation to educate them. Second point I would make is that we are entering a phase, a cycle of state government where four or five years ago we might have been in the situation, what do we do with all of this excess money, and had to come up with creative ways of spending state money. We are now in a position where cuts are going to have to be made, and if we are going to