

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Wehrbein.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Yes, Madam President, members, I was excused Friday and I felt really totally at a loss when I found that we had dipped into the Highway Trust Fund to the point that we have. I've long supported the teachers. I voted for the money when it came out of General Fund, but I also have had a long understanding and we raised the sales tax on vehicles, ultimately on vehicles that that money was to stay in the Highway Trust Fund and go where it has been designated to go via the distribution formula of the Highway Trust Fund. I felt it was appropriate to reconsider this after the weekend. I just ask you to consider when we do what we're doing, not saying that teachers don't deserve the pay, but we are also dipping heavily into not only state road building funds, but I think probably more critically county and city and village road funds. If there is any frustration in the country that I've sensed to county government and since then, especially in county government, also in city and just even a month ago is of the total inadequacy of funds for cities, villages and counties to do their road building. We have dipped heavily into that by making this effort that we did last Friday. I simply think you should stop and consider that there just is no easy way to do what you want to do and that is to help the teachers, but I think if we were going to do it more appropriately we ought to be taking our of state General Fund somewhere and we need to find the effort to do that. A year ago we had allowed nearly all the money, \$15 million in the fund when it first came to the floor and we kept spending and spending in May until finally for whatever reason the money was eventually cut to, I guess it's \$7 million. But a year ago is when we should have been thinking about how we were going to cut spending so that money would fit and to come in this year and say that this is an entitlement or it was a gift or a gift to... a windfall or whatever, to me is not accurate because when this was... when 1059 was debated it was recognized that this money was going to go to Highway Trust Fund. It was to be money to go there. It would avoid raising the gas tax to replace it and I just simply think we need to take this into account and reconsider this on a Monday morning after hopefully a pleasant weekend for everyone. Road building is critical to Nebraska's economic development. State highway system is in fairly good shape but look at the Omaha interstate problem and the money that is needed there alone over the next three or four years before it is completed is enormous. Several