

accidents in Omaha this morning which leads you to believe that the highway safety issue is critical in many areas of our state under heavy traffic loads. But let's put aside the heavy traffic loads and consider again the rural roads. And once again I remind you that in most cases rural roads today in addition to the infrastructure, the bridges, the culverts, the drainage, all of this is being let go in many, many, many counties because they absolutely do not have the money, they do not have the property tax base to find that and then here we are taking away several million dollars from them for a purpose that really was not it's original intent. Lastly, I want to state that even though I support the teachers once again, I do not feel the final analysis we should be getting into earmarked Highway Trust Fund roads, road funds. We have had a history of having a designated funding source for roads across the state for a long time. I wished I knew how long it was. But to start this route that we are heading on Friday, even though many say it's not their intent to break precedence, it certainly is going to be a temptation in the future. So I just ask you to quietly consider what we have done, reflect is that really what you wanted to do, is that really the path you wanted to head on as we head into the last closing days of our session? Do we really want to make this major error? Because I truly want to vote for 1272 myself, but I'll have a very difficult time doing it if it's going to have the present amendment on it. I just simply ask for your reconsideration.

**PRESIDENT MOUL:** Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. Senator Ashford, followed by Senators Nelson, Lamb, Hefner and Lynch. Senator Ashford.

**SENATOR ASHFORD:** Thank you, Madam President and members, I'm going to oppose the motion at this time for a couple of reasons. One is what I understand what Senator Wehrbein is saying and he makes a good argument about the necessity of maintaining the full funding for roads, rural roads and interstate systems and urban roads and highways. I think his argument is good and we have to look at it and think about it. But the reason I'm going to oppose it is I think there are other funding sources that we can look at that would enable us both to provide the full funding of the teacher bill and at the same time provide full funding for the Highway Trust Fund and I think that should be our obligation at this point is to look for ways of fully funding both programs. I know I'm going to have an amendment that I'm drafting now that will put a sales tax on interstate