

without a hearing. It has had a hearing. There have been...the public has had an opportunity to give its views on this tax before the legislative committee. Again, I would...I wish we could find some other alternative other than this, but I have made a commitment to funding the teacher pay bill. It is good for economic development in our state, in my view, that we have a state education system that pays its teachers at least in the middle of state...in the middle of the states of the union and not at the bottom end. Again, as I said yesterday, it seems to me that, as we are trying to attract new industry to Nebraska...

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR ASHFORD: ...that at least I have been told that every industry looking at Nebraska to move in as a potential site asks, what is your educational system? How does it match up against other states that we're looking at? That's one of the very two or three prime...primary factors. So I support that initiative. I support Senator Schrock's compromise proposal. It's maybe not the best but it's, I think, that certainly I can live with at this point. If that doesn't pass, maybe there are others. If not, we'll have to have a vote up or down on the Highway Trust Fund. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Ashford. Senator Nelson. Senator Lynch.

SENATOR LYNCH: Pass.

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Coordsen.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, a couple of questions, if I may. I see Senator Withem is on the phone. Okay, a question of Senator Withem.

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Withem, would you respond, please.

SENATOR COORDSEN: I'm curious, how many other states supplement teacher salaries by a mechanism such as this?

SENATOR WITHEM: Quite a number of other states have programs, career ladders and such. Iowa, this program is based very similar to the program in Iowa. Many states, during their education reforms in the 1980s addressed teacher salaries. Many of them did it through a career ladder concept as opposed to