

we are not cutting out the program entirely but cutting it back. And, as we look at budget cuts over the next biennium, we're going to have to look very hard at existing programs to reallocate dollars out of programs and other programs or cut them back or cut them out entirely. And I...I know there is some resistance to cutting this program back at all. I would suggest to you that we start getting in practice because it's going to happen more and more over the next two years. Another point though, Senator Robinson has been talking to me about ways of trying to look at alternatives or reducing the cut back, and, for your information, Senator Robinson, I already have filed for Select File an amendment to LB 1272 which will cut...will make the cut approximately 1.5 million. It reinstates the special education funding for special ed students, who are wards of the court, back up to 100 percent of the cost. I've talked to Liz Hruska about this who has done most of the background work on this piece of legislation and I am convinced that that's a legitimate...legitimate move to make. Please don't vote against advancement of this because of LB 1272, the original bill. I will...we will work together, I will work together with those who are concerned about this legislation to try to deal with it between now and Select File and I am willing to deal right now and as I have done with this amendment...with the Select File amendment to reinstate the special ed at 100 percent of cost. But I think that, again, we're going to have to start thinking about these kinds of cut-backs in programs and these are tough choices, very tough choices. I would suggest to you that this choice in this program is not going to be anywhere near as tough as the programmatic choices we're going to have to make in the next biennium. But I'm willing to work with you, Senator Robinson, on this and I hope you will vote to advance this bill in the spirit of trying to work this out so that we can try to have a good bill and a good solid bill on Final Reading. With that, I'm going to relinquish the rest of my time to Senator Bernard-Stevens. Thank you.

**SPEAKER BAACK:** Senator Bernard-Stevens, you have two minutes.

**SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS:** Thank you, Senator Ashford. Mr. Speaker and members of the body, there's been a very good, lively, at times, emotional discussion on the issue. I don't think there's anything I could say that will solidify in anyone's mind one way or another how they're going to vote. I think we know. But I do appreciate the intensity and the point of view of people on both sides. It is always difficult when we