

when we first starting giving this bonus to our teachers, and I sure support Senator Conway. I think it is an amendment that needs to pass that is a very fair amendment because it does help those low income that need it much more than the higher income teachers. Thank you.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Schellpeper. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I rise in strong, vehement opposition to this amendment. This amendment undoes one of the very positive things that we, as a body, did with the teacher pay bill last year. If you recall, we had some of...frankly, some of the very same frustrations that lead Senator Conway to offer this amendment, a number of us also had. Our concern was that when the money went out to teachers, when the local bargaining units were empowered to bargain with the school boards the distribution, that in many cases what the local school boards did was abdicate their responsibilities, told the local teachers' association, do with it as you please, it is your money, and in many ways, the plans came in, not oriented toward what is needed to improve education, to attract new teachers, to retain career teachers, or whatever. It was just based on an economic principle of who controls the bargaining unit and who gets the money. I share Senator Conway's concerns with that. One of the things we did, as a body, last year though was we said any money above \$15 million to \$20 million will be distributed on a performance-based nature, that those teachers who do more based upon whatever more means at the local level, serving on curriculum committees, working the summers, merit, if they want to do merit, a multitude of other things will get more money. Had an interesting experience on Sunday evening. I was visiting with a teacher, an elementary school teacher who was flying back from Chicago to Lincoln, about a number of education issues. This teacher I think, unfortunately, is probably in a position of transitioning out of the classroom into other things. One of her frustrations with teaching is this is a person that serves on curriculum committees, this is a person that works hard on lesson plans, this is a teacher that mentors other teachers, this is a teacher that gets paid exactly the same amount of money as the teacher that comes into the school in the morning, puts in eight hours, and goes home. That is one of the crying problems in education today. We addressed that last year with an amendment to LB 91 that says we will have a performance-based program in place in Nebraska. Senator Conway's amendment