

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Conway. We are on the Conway amendment. Senator Schimek.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. President, and members of the body, I rise in opposition to the Conway amendment, not, Senator Conway, that I don't agree with basically what you're trying to do here, but I don't know that I think this is the right way to do it. I mean, I don't think this is the right way to do it. I do have serious concerns over particularly those beginning teachers' salaries and I have, in my hands, some information from the Department of Education that talks about 43 teachers in the State of Nebraska that make less than \$14,000 a year. And the lowest one on that salary schedule is \$9,934 a year. These teachers range in experience from one year to 23 years. The one who has been in teaching for 23 years is making \$13,200. That is criminal. The one who is making the least amount of money, \$9,934, has only been in teaching one year. How anybody, however, could support a family on \$9,934 a year is beyond my comprehension. I'm sure there are a lot of people who do it, but I imagine they have to supplement those incomes with food stamps and a lot of other kinds of services. We have got one teacher in Nuckolls County that has been teaching for 15 years who is making \$10,800 a year. I think that's a serious problem. And I, all through this debate this year about the teachers' salaries, I felt that maybe we were approaching the problem from the wrong direction and that maybe it isn't really the state's responsibility to set those teachers' salaries and to set them at an adequate range, that maybe it's up to the local districts to come up with that money. However, I think that we, as legislators, have overall responsibility for the educational institutions in this state and I would suggest to you that maybe rather than going through all these gyrations that we've been going through this year trying to find money from a lot of different funds, that we should simply say to those local school districts, look, we believe the salaries of the beginning teacher in this state should be set at whatever we come up with, 17,000, 18,000, whatever, and, you know, you have the choice of meeting that or not but if you don't, here's what happens to the state aid that you receive. I mean, it's kind of a handle and it's kind of a maybe a carrot and a stick approach but why are we struggling to come up with the money for those salaries for teachers all over this state when it's really the responsibility of the local school boards? It's unconscionable that these local school