

SENATOR SCHELLPEPER: Mr. Chairman and members, the committee amendments make a few changes. They make a technical amendment to refer to Fiscal Year 1999 to the year 2000, by June 30th, the year 2000. They change the reference, the term "Internet" so that school districts can use any statewide computer information network that is designated by the State Board of Education. It provides that first priority for funding from the Educational Innovation Fund, which is lottery dollars, would be to provide grants to school systems so that they can make a direct connection to a statewide computer information network. It provides that grants are to be awarded on the basis of need, ability to pay, and the number of buildings in each system which are suitable for connection to the computer network. It also provides that systems which have already established a direct connection to the computer network are eligible for other grants to meet additional telecomputing needs. Most of the amendments, committee amendments are technical, but some of them do make some word changing. I would move for the committee amendments. Thank you.

SENATOR HALL: Thanks, Senator Schellpeper. On the committee amendments, Senator Withem, your light is next.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Yeah, Senator Hall, members of the body, beings my light is on, I will take advantage and maybe speak only once at this particular point, but I want to inform the body, and Senator Robinson, and anybody else that is interested about what my views are on this bill, why I am not going to do what I wanted to do today, but why we may have some...hopefully an agreement to change the bill; if not, some very serious disagreements with the bill. First of all, LB 860, as it is currently written, I am in strenuous opposition to. It begins the process that we probably all knew was going to be there someday of whittling away at the lottery funds that were passed to support education improvement efforts, grants applied for by local school districts to enhance education opportunity for students. It begins the process, and there is several bills in this year, this is only one of them. There are several bills in this year that have done that. This is the one that made it to the floor. It is my feeling that we made a pact with the voters when the voters voted on the lottery as to where that lottery...those lottery funds would go. It also, I would point out, in the last ten years of education, supposed education improvement, where we have been challenging local school districts to improve their quality of education, the lottery