

SENATOR WITEK: Senator Hall, members of the body, I rise in favor of Senator Robinson's bill. At the time, I had a bill in at the same time as Senator Robinson that was heard that same day, and my request was to take the lottery money and put it into the 1059 fund so that discretion on what to do with it was just to put it into the 1059 fund so it did away with any discretion there, and then the discretion on how to spend it was up to the school boards. It would go into the budget of every school district via the distribution of the 1059 fund because of, as Senator Janssen mentioned, I also have been paying very close attention to some of the comments, and some people have contacted me about their feeling that it is an inequitable distribution of funds. And I think something that I keep hearing from people about the lottery money, two things, really, when they said to put it into education, I think they thought they were going to get some relief from some of the spending in education, possibly even property tax relief, because it would ease up on some of the spending coming straight out of the property tax and give us maybe a little property tax relief, which we could accomplish if we put it into the 1059 fund. But what...we didn't do that, we took this money and we started a whole new bureaucracy, and they are taking the money, the lottery money, and they are handing it out for new programs, and new pilot programs that it is only the seed money to start so we are going to ask for more tax money to keep them all going. So it's really not, I think, what people had in mind when they voted for money into education, in my opinion. I am sure people will disagree with that, but people that I talk to, it is really not what they had in mind. I think when they thought education, it was going to go into the schools. If you will look through some of this information, it is not just going to our schools now, it is going to other community programs that are existing that I guess fall under the criteria that was set up by this committee that was set up, and we are spending a couple of hundred thousand dollars just on this committee, as I understand it. So when I heard Senator Robinson's bill had made it out of committee, I am very much in favor of this because, as Senator Janssen again said, and Senator Robinson I am sure would agree, it makes at least an attempt at some equity of distribution of these funds. I know my district has already...already has access in some of our schools to the Internet, and I have even asked Senator Hall for access to the Internet for state senators because it is awesome, and it is a wonderful tool, and I really would love to have each of us have that tool at home. And I know some of us can't afford it, so I think it would be great