

SENATOR SCHROCK: Mr. President, members of the body, I'd like to speak not only to the amendment, but to the bill and of course I am the senator that prioritized the bill and that's the reason it's on the docket today. I don't know how many of you represent large rural areas. I'm looking at Senator Jones over there, I know he does. There are 7 counties in my district and there are currently 17 high schools functioning and it's terrible disincentive for them to consolidate if they all of a sudden find out after they consolidate they will lose state funds or 1059 funds. Senator Withem, it is true that Beaver City, Oxford and Orleans will benefit, but they will not benefit any more than had they not consolidated so I think it's appropriate that they should participate and only fair. Another situation that took place in the district I represent, the schools of Blue Hill, Red Cloud, Guide Rock and Campbell tried to consolidate and three of the districts approved the plan, the Blue Hill district did not and the vote wasn't...it wouldn't have taken too many more votes in Blue Hill for that to have taken place. And I think it would have been progress, but one of the things I heard when this was taking place, and the vote did take place while I was campaigning so I'm very familiar with the issue, was that why should we consolidate, we're going to lose state aid if we consolidate. And so the three years that they would be allowed to participate in a hold-harmless manner at least the first year 100 percent, the second year at 66 percent and the third year at 33 percent, I think would provide a lot of incentives for school consolidation out there. And if you represent a rural district, the last thing you want to talk about is mandatory consolidation and the body can talk about we need to consolidate county services, we need to consolidate schools and you know not too many of us will disagree with you, but it's just a hornet's nest if you're a politician living in a rural area and you start bringing those issues up. How much nicer it would be for them to decide that upon themselves and for them to do it by their own actions and I think this will provide an incentive. I know I have talked to the school districts of Campbell, Blue Hill, Red Cloud and Guide Rock and they're looking at another proposal. This might be what gets them over the edge, I'm not sure of that. I think they need to be reminded also that somewhere down the road we're going to have to become more efficient in education, so this is the carrot approach. I think it's very fitting that Senator Bohlke introduced this bill on behalf of the Governor and looking at what it does for my district and what its potential