

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay, I would give the rest of my time to Senator Withem.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Senator Withem.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Robinson. This has been a real interesting bill and a real interesting process. First of all, if you remember, long time ago on General File I had indicated that the goals of Senator Robinson's original bill, of expanding access to...through telecommunications to the Internet system, was a worthy goal, I just objected to the funding principal. And we have since sat down and talked about different ways of funding it. I objected to taking money out of the lottery. We have found other.... As a matter of fact, what happened was Senator Robinson, don't ever get into negotiation with him because he basically has the original intent of his bill there, plus two additional funding sources for his program there, so I commend him in his abilities to do that. I had objected to the original bill because it put too much of an emphasis on the lottery funds which were passed quite recently with the idea of funding the School Improvement Programs, had too much of an emphasis of funding out of that program. What we're doing here is using other sources. And I, too, would like to talk about the School Weatherization Program because I think there is a lesson here that goes beyond this bill. And I know you're going to have people who have been recruited at the last minute to come in and defend the School Weatherization Program, and I'd certainly listen to their arguments as they come up. But this is an example of a program that was a good program, Senator Wesely, it was a good program back when it was created. I served on a local school board at that time and we took advantage of this program and did some school improvements. What you've seen happen over the years though, a lot of those needs have in fact been taken care of. You have an agency of state government now, the Energy Department, that I understand pays...and my figures may not be exactly right, but this is the numbers as I remember I heard from representatives of the Governor's Office the other day, something like parts of 13 people's salaries out of this fund, perhaps as high as the equivalent of maybe 5 FTEs out of this fund. They came in with a bill this year, LB 582, which would have done essentially the same thing that Senator Robinson wants to do allow them to use telecommunication equipm...purchase telecommunication equipment with these funds. What Senator Robinson's and my amendment does is it simply shifts that function from Department of Energy over