

February 14, 1996 LB 1050

the Legislature. Senator Beutler, do you wish to speak to the Wickersham amendment?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Madam Lieutenant Governor, members of the Legislature, I wish to oppose the Wickersham amendment because I think this is a matter of keeping faith with the kids, not a matter of keeping faith with those who were protecting special interests when a deal was cut a few years ago. The question before you today is whether you believe in equalization as a philosophic matter, or whether you do not. That is the principle that we have been operating on in this Legislature in terms of trying to bring an equal education opportunity to all kids in the state. What is the philosophy behind Senator Wickersham's amendment? It destroys and goes counter to the concept of equalization. What is his philosophy? That those districts that are rich ought to continue to be rich at the expense of the kids of the state, at the expense of an equalization concept? I don't think that that's a philosophy that has much of a foundation in terms of the moral attitudes of most of the people in this Legislature. I think we believe in equalization, I hope we do. But I know and I recognize that there's one gigantic element entering in here that's confusing everything, and that's not the question of fairness to the kids, it's the question of fairness to the taxpayers and the gigantic problem that we have with property taxes as it is perceived to be unfair to the taxpayers. But I submit to you that in this debate, whether it's this aspect of it or the rest of it, we must separate those two concepts. We cannot be unfair to the kids because we think the taxpayers are being screwed. Really, you've got to be fair to the kids and then you got to deal separately and just as strenuously as you can with the question of fairness to the taxpayers. And that's where Jerry Warner's effort comes in, where the effort of all the committees comes in, that's where the super bills relating to property tax come in this session. They are all there to deal with the question of fairness to the taxpayer. But I simply want to urge you today to separate those two concepts and not to do in the kids in the name of the taxpayers. We can solve both problems, I'm of a mind-set to help with both problems. I think there is generally a favorable attitude in this Legislature towards solving both problems. But certainly we should not, in my opinion at least, get things mixed up and continue to worry about fairness to the taxpayers when what we're talking about in this bill today, at this time, and especially on this amendment