

February 14, 1996 LB 1050

SPEAKER WITHEM: ...higher income tax rates. The time to act is now, I propose we oppose the amendment.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Withem. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Madam President. I hope the members were listening to...certainly we should listen always when the Speaker speaks. But, on the other hand, I hope they were listening very closely when he read the statute. The intention of the Legislature was that we were going to share the income. It doesn't say 20 percent in there, it doesn't say 30 percent, doesn't say 26 and a half percent, we are going to share the income. I just received, and I think everybody else received it as well, now I've...here it is, a chart that...and I haven't paid attention to even who put it out. But this chart that you just received clearly shows why we do not, cannot vote for the Wickersham amendment. If you look at the increase of dollars that districts that have higher incomes are receiving, it graphically shows how fast that has risen dollarwise. And if you put an equal graph on there, which was not done, but if you put a graph on the poor districts, on how much their income has grown, you will see a tremendous divergence of what's happening in the state of Nebraska. If you agree to the Wickersham amendment or any amendment that provides for a percentage, what you're basically saying is as a wealthy income...wealthy districts on income, as their income grows that, yes, you capped it at a percentage, but that percentage is multiplied by the increase in the income out there, and therefore the districts will still receive more dollars. What the Wickersham amendment does is extend the pain and agony longer, because eventually, over a period of time, even that will cause problems when you get into dollars that we're trying to get into equalization. We need to make the move now and stop the hemorrhaging and still maintain our commitment to the public, we are sharing the income tax revenue. The other thing I'd like to point out is check with your school districts, and I don't care if they're equalized or nonequalized. Ask them if they feel the state has met its commitment to try to meet a goal of 45 percent funding in school finance to those districts who are in need. And they'll all tell you that, no, we haven't, and they'll all say, in fact they came in last year demanding that we fund it at 45 percent. Every time you add dollars into the income side on