

February 15, 1996 LB 349, 1050

counted as a wealth resource when we're calculating state aid to schools, and that the way 1059 did it was through the income tax rebate. So you have an acknowledgement that it ought to be counted, you have the description of the way it's done, and that was part of the reason for defeating 349, and now, just a couple of days later, the proposal is quite the contrary, it is simply to substantially restrict access to that wealth base. Somewhat of an inconsistent argument with those that were advanced with regard to LB 349, almost a bait and switch, if you will. The other aspect of this debate that I think needs to be brought to your attention, and this affects equalization schools, this is supposed to be a bill that will, or this proposal is supposed to be one which will assist equalization districts. Well, I think that assistance is far less than what you might have been led to believe and, secondly, I'm not sure that in the long term it's assistance at all, because remember, the income tax rebate is fixed in statute and it is simply appropriated by...

SENATOR CROSBY: One minute.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ...the Legislature and sent out to the school districts. The balance of the state aid, the equalization side, this Legislature has actually reduced on at least one occasion, in my experience. And if we reduce it again there will be fewer dollars. And you know why we reduced it? There were competing needs and we had cuts in a number of state programs. We actually cut equalization aid in 1992. If we move additional rebate dollars over to the equalization side, we could cut that at some time in the future, there's nothing that says we cannot. If we leave it as rebate dollars, it is far likely...

SENATOR CROSBY: Time.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ...that we will maintain that program.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. Senator Beutler, on the Wickersham amendment.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Crosby, members of the Legislature, there were a number of items that were brought up by Senator Wickersham today and yesterday and contribute to what I think has been a very good debate on this particular issue. Just a couple of things I want to say. First of all, it seems to me