

SENATOR BROMM: Thank you, Madam President. I want to take this opportunity, on Senator Maurstad's amendment, to speak very briefly about a philosophical question that I think his amendment raises. I introduced LB 1374, this year, in Revenue Committee, which basically I think Senator Kristensen introduced the same bill a couple years ago. And that bill says that we will change the way we finance things in our schools so that the state pays the teachers' salaries. The bill envisions leaving building costs and needs, administrative costs, and other staffing costs, noncertified staff, to the discretion of the local board and local district. And if they want to...if they want to finance more extravagant building needs, or they want to have a superintendent with a doctorate degree, and they want to have x number of principals, that's their decision, that's the local responsibility and local district's responsibility to finance it. I think that's basically a pretty good policy. And I think if we're going to get to the issue of the state taking over some part of responsibility for a part of the school operation, whether it be paying bonds for those districts that have built facilities or something else, I think I would prefer to see us get into the business of paying the teacher salaries. And I think we'll have better control of our spending if we leave other resources to the local district, including the building needs, for that matter. And so...and there are other issues involved here. We've already taken a number of dollars from the income tax rebate and I don't think we can do any more. And the number of dollars we're talking about spread over the whole state is not going to be extremely beneficial, I don't think, on paying the bonds off for people that have bonds. So I can't support the amendment. But I do want to remind the body that I do think at some point in the future we do have an opportunity to help solve part of this problem by the state taking responsibility for some component of the educational cost that most schools have no control over. We have control over whether we build new buildings or not. We have control over whether we build swimming pools or not. We have control over whether we want to have five gymnasiums or three gymnasiums, but we don't have control basically over what we pay our teachers for salaries. We all need a core number of teachers to teach the subjects we need to teach, and if we don't pay a salary that's appropriate, the Court of Industrial Relations will make sure that we do, that's beyond our control. So what I'm saying is I think if we're going to take control of something and provide some real relief and restructure this thing, at some