

PRESIDENT ROBAK: It is withdrawn.

CLERK: ...AM3870. The next amendment is by Senators Withem and Jones, AM4038. (See pages 1451-52 of the Legislative Journal.)

PRESIDENT ROBAK: The Chair recognizes Senator Withem to open on his amendment.

SPEAKER WITHEM: How can you, with all these people standing in front of me, how can you recognize me? Thank you, thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, thank you, thank you very much. I appreciate that. This amendment is...is one that, quite frankly, recognize that is a rather significant departure on my part, deals with the concept of a sparsity factor in the state aid formula, and over the last few weeks, I have been visiting with people who have been concerned about the impact in their part of the state of the common levy. You remember the common levy, those, and part of my problem I guess is that I lived with these issues just literally night and day for so long that they are a part of me, in the same way I think that the Highway Trust Fund may be to Senator Warner, or some of the ecological issues may be to Senator Beutler, that they take on a life in and of themselves. And I sometimes don't realize how much of the body was not around when we went through these battles several years ago. But one of...the thing that we did to resolve the raging fight in our state over mandatory...mandatorily forcing the Class I school districts to close their schools was we ultimately came to a situation with a common levy. That common levy was taken to court last year. The Supreme Court just less than a month ago, I think, issued a ruling that indicated that the common levy was a legitimate tax policy by this Legislature. And that prompted some individuals to begin wanting to revisit that as a legislative issue. So we've had several discussions, and I've given a lot of thought to the issue, and I know that the common levy, in certain parts of the state, whether they are in Class VI school districts, or are affiliating with Class III school districts, has caused a great deal of difficulty, but to me it's not the wrong policy. The common levy just simply indicates that anybody sharing a high school will pay the same levy to support K through 12 education, but the way that interreacts with equalization has caused some individuals in the sparsely populated portions of our state to not only have internal tax equity, but they have lost state aid because of