

eventually will be able to do that.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President, members. I rise in support of the Withem amendment as well. I appreciate what he's attempting to do. I do support the mill levy issue and the affiliation issue and the efforts that we undertook to try and get some equity into the responsibility for taxation that had been so unequal across the state of Nebraska. I understand that Senator Jones had wanted to address this and perhaps make a change in that, so I'm appreciative that he's willing to compromise on this as well. The one concern that I have, and I hope, Senator Withem, when you close on the amendment, you will be able to address this, is I can understand the sparsity issue. We all appreciate that, and the fact that we have rural areas of this state that are very sparse in population. At the same time, those areas, in some cases, have refused or at least been reluctant to try and join forces to create efficiencies in delivery of educational services in their districts. I've got legislation that was killed rather rapidly in the Education Committee, as Senator Wickersham referred to, to have 600 students be required before you can, in fact, have a school district, in an attempt to create a significant number of students to create some efficiency in delivery of education to those students, and it's the very sparsely populated areas of the state that seem to resist the efforts that I think we need to take to try and downsize government in a way that constructively retains adequate educational quality and services and does so at a lower cost. And so I am very concerned about the fact, I do not want to reward with a change in the funding formula school districts, yes, they are sparse in population, but then they turn around and refuse to work together to perhaps merge and consolidate to reduce the overhead costs involved. And so this is a study, this will have a report, and we can all take a look at it, but I am laying out right now, at the start of the process, that I, for one, will be very skeptical of any proposals that come back in; yes, to recognize sparsity, but, no, to try to again provide additional funding so that we head off the inevitable effort that will have to be undertaken, at some point, to bring some of these school districts together. I think it's clearly a fact that we have too many school districts, that in many of these districts they have too few students, that they are inefficient and waste too much money in