

not too sure how all your details worked out. But I think it's very necessary that this particular discussion go along with this bill, because what I've heard on the area of cities and counties is the intent that they restructure, we allow for consolidation, we allow them to do things differently, and yet I've not heard that discussion when it comes to the schools. So the only way, apparently, that we expect schools to reduce their budgets is strictly by cutting, just reducing budgets and not looking at innovative ways to be able to do that. I think probably, like most of you, I've been meeting with groups at home, and one of the questions I had from schools, and they were different size schools all at one meeting, was, what is the real intent of the Legislature here? What is it that they really want us to do? I had said at the time, I think it's that they expect you to restructure, reorganize, consolidate, look at ways to make your system more efficient. One of the remarks that came back was, then why don't you just mandate it? Why doesn't the state take the leadership to say if that's what you really want us to do, in other words, why don't you take the heat instead of expecting local school boards or local administrators to take the heat? Why doesn't the Legislature do that, and why don't they go ahead and put in the legislation what it is you really want us to do and say that rather than just putting on lids and caps? And I think they have a good point. I think we've done several things, all the way from affiliation to county reorganization committees. I don't know how many of you have looked at your county reorganization plan, but I suggest you go back and try and find one, see how often they met, what type of alternatives they really came up with, because that system has been in place. We have gradually been reducing districts throughout the state. I think not too many years ago we were over 1,000, and now we're a little over 700. But I think we still rank third largest in the nation, behind Texas and California, for the number of school districts that we have. And, Senator Vrtiska, Colorado and Wyoming both did mandate, they did say to their local entities that they would reorganize, and it did come from leadership in the Legislature. I think we're sending a very difficult message to our schools, and I think it's a different one than we're sending again to cities and counties in that what we're saying to cities and counties is, you need to consolidate, you need to combine services, you need to restructure, you need to look at doing business differently. And I don't hear that same debate, I do not hear those same comments when it comes to schools. Basically what I