

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Beutler, to close on your amendment.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Withem, members of the Legislature, it's really sad that in such a critical situation as this there's not more sense of balance about things. And it's really sad that in this particular situation the education lobby, which most of the time, in speaking for the schools and for itself, speaks for the interest of children, are in such confusion and disarray at this particular critical moment. And I think part of the problem is simply the fact that the heroes of education in this particular Legislature are all on the side that have made a tactical decision which says we are abandoning you temporarily because we must do this in order to save you in the long term. In order to get to the place of low property taxes and quality education, we have to take this enormous risk. And we have to pass through this valley or this canyon where maybe we'll get through and maybe we won't. And all I'm arguing to you today is that certainly the better part of judgment, in my opinion, is not to take this major risk, not to do it all or nothing, but rather to inject a measure of sanity into this chancy situation, just a small measure of sanity, just an indication to all those who have children out there that, yes, we probably will come through in the end, not without requiring some serious sacrifices and some serious efforts towards efficiency, but we're not going to destroy your schools. It's only a partial measure, only a third to a fourth of the revenues that are being reduced, that's all it is. It's not efficiency or taxes. We all know we have to have both replacement revenues and efficiencies. And instead of the burden being borne entirely in two years or one year, let's be reasonable people, let's be thoughtful people, let's take a chunk of it now so that the measures that must be done in the ensuing year or two are not so dramatic, not so huge. I'm just afraid that if we leave it all for then that not even Senator Landis could mediate a desirable solution to the problem. It's going to be too big and the schools are going to be hurt. And I'm not willing to take that chance myself without some measure of good will, without some indication from this Legislature today that we're on a course that looks to a balance and that looks both towards quality education and towards reduced property taxes. I wonder what all of the education people out there will be thinking...

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.