

thought he may have gone too far. So he said, tell me, my good man, why did you ask me that question? He said I read this morning that the Pope has diabetes. (Laughter)

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Robinson. I don't see Senator Robinson. Senator Schimek. Senator Bernard-Stevens. Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Withem, members of the Legislature, I've avoided getting up in this particular situation because no votes are going to be changed, and it seems like all we do is cause each other to feel bad, whether we're voting one way or the other at this particular point in time. And as Senator Bchlke has indicated, it's a hard vote either way you vote. I'm not going to vote for the bill. I'm not here to persuade you, though. I think I'm just here to share kind of an historical perspective with you for one second. But years ago, I think it was either 1982 or 1983, this Legislature went through the same kind of trauma with property taxes and school reorganization. And instead of taking an indirect approach to things, we took a very direct approach to things, and we passed a bill that got 25 votes in this Legislature that did two things: consolidated the schools so that there'd be about 350 of them, and it put a penny...increased the sales tax by a penny and put it into school funds so we could shift away from property taxes. Two things. You know what you're going to do next year and the year after? You're going to do two things. You're going to increase the sales tax by at least a penny and you're probably going to force the consolidation, either directly or indirectly, down to around three to four hundred school districts. And I don't know what lesson there is in that particularly. It just seems very sad to me that in 1982, 13 years ago, we could be where we're getting to a year or two from now, and think of all the trauma, all of the consternation, all of the wasted money that's been spent in those ensuing years. And I guess in a sense I...I feel good about this institution and what we did. I mean, we had leadership then, we took it on, we did it. It was then rejected by the public. The legislative leadership has come back and tried to do it a different way, and it's been slowly getting at the problem as fast as we can, given the political forces I guess in choosing that particular route. I mean, when I came into the Legislature in 1978, there were 1,050 school districts, I think. And now it's down to, what, 668 or something right in that neighborhood. And property taxes, in fact as related to