

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

March 9, 1999

LB 386

of technology. I don't know how many schools have said to me that without the support of ESUs, and particularly the technical support to keep the systems up and running, they would not be able to produce the distance learning, a number of things that are just as key to small schools as they are to larger schools. And so this issue is a major issue that faces us, one that I think certainly should be a high priority as we discuss the level of funding that we want necessary for children in the classrooms, and so with that, we are ready to answer questions. I will tell you that I think that Senator Wehrbein, from the Appropriations Committee, will be speaking to the issue, and that we have had discussions with the ESUs asking them not to levy the half a cent. All ESUs agreed with that and did not levy that half a cent, except for one ESU that I think and it totaled about \$35,000 what they levied. But all the others agreed not to, even though they had the authority and they received a letter from Senator Wehrbein, Senator Wickersham and myself saying that we would articulate the concerns, what happened on the floor of the Legislature, and we would continue our commitment to the proper funding of ESUs in this very important area. And with that, I will give my remaining time to Senator Price, and thank her again for prioritizing this bill.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Bohlke. Senator Price, you have approximately five minutes.

SENATOR PRICE: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor, and members of the body. As a freshman senator with my background in health and in education, I tried to decide what my priority bill would be. I selected this one because it is a natural with my background in education. This will influence every student in the state through every ESU in the state, and that is what I was seeking was broad coverage on my priority bill. I will explain a bit about this bill. In 1993, the Nebraska Unicameral gave the Nebraska Educational Service Units, the ESUs, the authority to raise tax levies, not to exceed .005 to provide telecomputing resources to school districts. Due to that initial and continuing support, the Nebraska telecomputing system is nationally recognized as one of the top programs in the nation. All of this success has been accomplished for a tax investment of approximately \$10 per student per year. The ability to maintain this effective telecomputing effort has been