

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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jeopardized by recent losses in property tax revenues. ESU tax funding for telecomputing was reduced almost \$4 million for the 1997-98 to the 1998-99 fiscal years. This resulted from a legislative change in 1998 that reduced general tax levies for ESUs from the maximum of 3.5 cents per \$100 of valuation to a maximum of 1.5 cents. At the same time, the telecomputing tax levy was reduced from .5 cents per \$100 to zero as a voluntary measure to comply with legislative intent of a total 1.5 cent tax levy for ESUs. Core service funds were awarded to ESUs in 1998. Core service funds though are categorical funds designated to provide staff development, technical training and instructional materials to aid school districts in the attainment of statewide educational goals and standards. The telecomputing tax money lost was dedicated to maintaining the infrastructure of the current ESUs telecommunication system. Without a quality infrastructure, the core service money applied to the technical training would be wasted due to total system malfunction. Technology has become the lifeblood of the Nebraska K through 12 educational system. The current frame relay system, which uniquely provides for remote management of the system across the state, has proven to be an efficient method of providing connectivity to school districts. If school districts were to provide their own individual access, it is estimated that the statewide cost would be \$4,364,000 greater than and in addition to what is currently being paid by the ESU hub site. Modern technology continues to change as infrastructure is updated. Money is continually needed to upgrade equipment and train staff. As general technical knowledge grows, so does the complexity of the questions and the repairs. Besides the continual evaluation of technology, usage rates in school districts continue to increase. Internet accounts have grown incrementally. Currently, bandwidth with usage nears a point where it may need to be increased. It appears that student and teacher use of technology will continue to increase as it becomes a much more integral part of the school's curriculum. I ask you to move this bill which provides intent language to appropriate \$3 million of General Funds...

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: One minute.

SENATOR PRICE: ...in 1999 to 2000 for technology infrastructure and the training of teachers to replace the five...the half cent