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LB 386

levy. The intent language also provides that the appropriation for 2000-2001 and each year thereafter shall be the amount appropriated in the prior year plus the basic allowable...allowable growth rate for schools plus the percentage growth in fall membership of member schools. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Price. Members, out of respect to your colleagues, if you could please keep your conversations off of the floor, people will be able to hear better. Senator Wickersham, you are recognized for discussion on the advancement of 386.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of LB 386. There was, I think, some misunderstanding a year ago about the capacity of ESUs to fully meet the requirements of the Edu...of the technology agenda that we had set for them. They did have, at one time, a property tax levy that could be used for that purpose. And the issue that came up last summer was whether or not that half cent levy was still there or whether they were constrained within the limitations that were in 1114. My advice was they were constrained within the levy limitations of 1114. The difficulty that that created was that the ESUs had submitted a budget request to the Legislature, and had been granted on the assumption that they still had a half cent levy. The ESUs in this last fiscal year bit the bullet, in many respects, and they met what we said the intent of the law was, that they should not levy that extra half cent for technology. I pledged to them then, and I hope that the Legislature will make good on our promise, or what I promised them is support for their technology agenda and adequate resources to carry it out. We do have and have had a very aggressive technology agenda in this state. We have extended the capacity for Internet connections to nearly every school in the state, if not every school in the state, as I speak. We have poured resources into distance learning initiatives. Those are beginning to bear fruit. We...now is not the time, in my estimation, to back up nor is it the time to go back to funding those initiatives out of property taxes. The only choice that I see before us is to go forward with that technology agenda, but to fund it out of the state's General Fund, as LB 386 suggests that we do. Thank you.