

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

May 5, 1999

LB 816

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Thank you, Senator. Senator Chris Peterson, you're next.

SENATOR C. PETERSON: Thank you, Senator Schimek and members of the body. And I would just like to echo what Senator Wehrbein has said. I also happen to feel that the Coordinating Commission does need to be strong with the authority that they have been given. Looking at the issues that came about when I served on it, you had the approval or disapproval of new programs, you were able to review and modify budgets, or make requests...make recommendations on budgets. And, if I'm remembering back to the issues that were there when I was there, there was the question about how much should they know, and how much was intrusion, how much was nitpicking and that type of issue. And so I'm somewhat reluctant to go down a path that I'm concerned about would limit, somewhat, the ability of the Coordinating Commission to look at the statewide vision. The comprehensive plan, when we worked on that, that was the idea that we were looking beyond just the roles and missions, and in the constitution it says that that's part of it, but beyond that, I believe, in how postsecondary education is to be provided equitably, I believe, in the state. And when you're looking at the three things that the Coordinating Commission has the authority to do, I would hesitate to move in a direction that would weaken them, prevent them from doing things that I feel are critical for us to know in the legislative process that would help us determine the needs that are out there for postsecondary education, the availability of funds, and the best way for them to be spent. Several of the issues that have been brought to me about limiting the amount of data that they can compile, that is just an extremely critical part of looking at programs and budgets is the amount of data that you have available. The ability for them to do new studies or looking at new programs that are beneficial to a state as a whole; we used one of those when we were looking at the numbers for the Gender Equity Committee that we had. As Senator Wehrbein said, the time frame is maybe more of an internal process in that, but I get very nervous when we start limiting the ability that they may have to do what I feel they are justified in doing and what we had put in place for them to do when the constitutional amendment was passed. Those are the concerns I have, and I'll continue to listen, if there is anymore discussion on that, and