

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

March 14, 2000 LB 1399

CLERK: Mr. President, LB 1399, was a bill originally introduced by Senator Bohlke. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 20 of this year, referred to the Education Committee, advanced to General File. I do have committee amendments, Mr. President.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Bohlke, you're recognized to open on LB 1399. Senator Bohlke.

SENATOR BOHLKE: Thank you, Mr. President and members. Improving teacher salaries, LB 1399, to do or not to do certainly will be the question that's before us. The Education Committee has heard from teachers and taxpayers across the state and, generally, there is support for ensuring that Nebraska schools retain quality teachers. There is also generally an understanding that to attain that goal salaries must be competitive. Three different legislative bills were introduced and the committee voted LB 1399 out to the floor for your consideration. And I thank Senator Suttle for making it her priority bill so that we would have the opportunity to consider it this session. In response to the question, to do or not to do, we need to determine some significant factors. Who, all teachers, only teachers in districts with greater needs than resources, only beginning teachers, only teachers who sign an 11-month contract or also when? Twenty million was in an amendment to LB 1399 in committee. That amount would have come from the Cash Reserve and would have been placed in a Trust Fund as a pledge or down payment for next year. However, do we...do we ask you for that money this year without being able to tell you who will receive the dollars or which school districts would qualify for helping increase teacher salaries? Where? Where will we get the money? The problem with setting aside a lump sum of money is that it does not produce an ongoing stream of revenue, and would most likely lead to a broken promise, must like the HELP Fund, years ago. If we need an ongoing revenue stream, there are few places to turn. One, we could allow school districts to increase their levies. However, most of you have indicated you do not wish to fund teacher salaries' increases from property taxes. Two, we can increase either sales or income taxes or broaden the tax base on sales tax. These solutions must come from the Revenue Committee. Another