

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

March 21, 2000 LB 1217

response is a little bit different than what I think Senator Raikes was suggesting to you. I believe that we did get our money's worth and I do think it was dollar for dollar property tax relief, although part of the dollars went to fund growth in the community college system. But I think you just...you have to stop and realize that if we had not put in the \$30 million that property taxes, not only would they have not gone down for community colleges, they would have, in fact, gone up by some \$5 million and that that would have been noticed by local taxpayers. I'm also concerned that if we do as Senator Raikes suggested that we will have the potential for an increase in property taxes during this coming year that property taxpayers will not appreciate. We're...we've had a couple...we've had one year of absolute decline in the level of property taxes on a statewide basis. We've had a subsequent year of what I would characterize as modest growth, although some taxpayers might disagree with me, in property taxes. If we do as Senator Raikes suggested, we will, I believe, drop off that path. We can construct a series of proposals yet this year that could result in moderate, even though maybe higher than last year, property tax growth in the state of Nebraska but, certainly, the proposal that came out of the Appropriations Committee to use \$30 million for additional aid to community colleges is integral to those efforts. And if it is removed, we will certainly see higher property taxes paid by our constituents, and I think that we will hear about that. The other thing that I might note is that at least in my part of the state we could not do anything that I believe is fairer or more appropriate in terms of...from the taxpayer's viewpoint, anyway, in terms of reducing property taxes than provide extra funding to community colleges. We have vast areas of our...of my district, Senator Jones has the same experience, that pay relatively high taxes, at least in dollar amounts, for support of community colleges and we're a long ways from the points at which those community college services are delivered, although to their credit, and I do mean this to their credit, the community colleges have been improving delivery of their services throughout our...throughout our districts. They are doing, I think, about as well as they can, but the point of the matter is that from the standpoint of many taxpayers, they pay...they pay a great deal of money with a very little service delivery from their standpoint. I don't know how we could ever correct that perception for them, and as long as they have that