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official benchmark of some kind, temporarily ended funding of education lottery programs and, instead, put the money in the General Fund. That bill became law so education lottery money, about \$8 million per year, is by current statute transferred to the General Fund through the upcoming biennium. The first change proposed in this amendment is to allocate half of the education lottery money, again about \$4 million a year, to the Nebraska Scholarship Act for fiscal years beginning with the 2005-2006 year or the first year after the upcoming biennium. The second change is to allocate half of the education lottery money to Nebraska Scholarship Act for the 2004-2005 fiscal year. That is the second year of the upcoming biennium, and the first year that the Nebraska Scholarship Act would go into effect. During 2004-05, the remaining half of the education lottery money would go to the General Fund. During 2005-2006, the remaining half of the education lottery would be used to fund teacher mentoring, innovative grants, and loan forgiveness for teachers. The Appropriations Committee has included this proposal in their recommendation. This would not only be an appropriate use of lottery funds but would make additional funds available to needy students at this critical time. This amendment is very important to the progress on the overall goal of restructuring and funding need-based aid. And I think it's critically important that we make progress. I urge your support. Thank you.

SPEAKER BROMM: Thank you, Senator Raikes. Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Bromm, members of the Legislature, I just wanted to indicate quickly that I appreciate the Appropriations Committee including my little bill in the package. And just to remind you, with respect to how important need-based aid is at the moment, as part of the cutbacks at the university, there will be once again a very significant increase in tuition, both at the state colleges and in the university system. This will be for the third year in a row, probably 10 percent or better, and so if nothing is done by us, that simply means there will be more and more kids who can't afford to get into the community colleges and the state colleges and the university because of the increases in tuition. So I hope we can do something to try to keep the system in balance as we