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LB 407

SENATOR COMBS: Folks, look at our demographics. We don't have the demographics of the six above us, no doubt. We're going to have to make some hard decisions here about our per capita spending on higher education. And I admit that I did not sit in the Appropriations Committee and you all are a lot smarter than me when it comes to the reams of paper that you have gone through and the hours of testimony you've listened to, and I respect that. However, the hard decisions have to be made and I'm still listening. I thank again Phil for bringing this, and I thank the Appropriations Committee for the work that they have done. I am still listening, however, I agree with most of what I have heard here, and that is we are going to reach a compromise somewhere between the violet colored copy and the goldenrod copy that's going to be best for the people of Nebraska. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Combs. Senator Wehrbein, on the Erdman amendment to LB 407, followed by Senator Vrtiska.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Thank you, Mr. President and members. First of all, I want to say this is not unusual to find a compromise. When you work in the public environment like this, this is what we always have to do to get there. In spite of the World-Herald editorial, whatever some of you other think that we'll never get there, we always have and we always get to a decision before we go home, and this is the way it's done. It's messy. It's frustrating. It's hard to do these. It makes these last three weeks very unpleasant, in my mind, but this is the way it's done when you're operating in a public body. Otherwise, we could sit around a table tonight and work it out and we could come out here and say this is the way it's going to be. We don't do it that way. I simply want to make some comments. Some have suggested we haven't made enough cuts, but you forget that we started out with a \$760 million gap, and acknowledging that \$80 million of that was cut off with the negotiations, we had programmed in \$120 million. Settlement was about \$40 million per the negotiations. But beyond that, it really isn't that we haven't cut. I mean I, to me, \$760 minus \$350 is \$410 million. To me it's a significant amount of cuts one way or another. Now some of those, admittedly, are not true cuts; they're cuts in the increases. But the point is they were originally...we had a