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FLOOR DEBATE

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through the State Treasury and the system was essentially converted into a dollar-for-dollar replacement, state dollars replacing local dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars poured into the state aid system. That was fine when we had the revenue coming in like it did in the mid to late nineties. The revenue tide is out now, as everyone knows, and the proposal before us now is to push the problem back on to property. Now, I agree with the argument that it's not an automatic property tax increase. We're allowing local boards to increase to \$1.10, if that's what we do, if that's what they want to do. I understand that. But in principle, we're not really solving the problem. Senator Raikes spoke about dodging the issue. In my view we are.

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN: One minute.

SENATOR MAXWELL: Thank you, Mr. President. We are dodging it. We're pushing it back to the local level. Do you see what's happened? We poured all this money into state aid and it was supposed to drive down that property tax and create property tax relief. Well, we've got all the money that we've put into state aid over the years and now we're talking about property tax drifting back up to where it was before. I don't know, does it stop at \$1.10? I don't know. Who can predict? I think we have a problem. I think the very fact that we're talking about doing this is proof that we have a problem that can't just be tweaked anymore. We're in need of significant change. I think I'll stop there and push my light again. Thank you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN: Thank you, Senator Maxwell. Senator Baker.

SENATOR BAKER: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I rise in opposition to Senator Wehrbein's amendment. I had an interesting weekend at home and e-mails, phone calls, personal visits from school board members, if none other, saying, don't do this to us. We don't want this responsibility, is basically what they're saying. I don't know whether a majority of the boards out there can't resist it. In several cases, my personal experience is, no, they couldn't resist going to \$1.05. They did have some options. What we're boiling down to here, the general principle we're talking about here is General Fund