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FLOOR DEBATE

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nominations? Seeing none, nominations will cease. We will now proceed to cast a written ballot for Chair of the Business and Labor Committee. The Clerk and Assistant Clerk will pass among you to gather the ballots. And the Chair would ask Senators Kopplin, Fischer, and Synowiecki to constitute the Teller Committee at the appropriate time. Thank you. The results of the balloting are that Senator Cunningham has 26 votes; Senator Combs, 22. Senator Cunningham is elected Chair of the Business and Labor Committee. Congratulations, Senator Cunningham. We will now proceed to the election of the Chair of the Education Committee. Nominations. Senator Raikes.

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. President. Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit that in the short time since you have moved from here to the front of the Chamber, I've noticed a resurgence of hearing in my right ear. (Laughter) Members of the Legislature, I would like to continue serving as Chair of the Education Committee. Therefore, I wish to nominate myself for that position. The circumstance presented us during the past four years has been challenging. Looking back, I am honored to have served on the Education Committee and in the Legislature during this time. In my view, the Legislature addressed the challenge responsibly and with courage. None of us got everything we wanted, but I'm convinced that, in the main, the result was good state policy. Certainly, the main...the hurdles were fiscal. But we also began to address the need for structural change--mental health; and to directly address policy issues that certainly it would have been easier to ignore--water policy. In the main, the citizens of the state, both those in and outside the education community, were not only cooperative, but allies in our efforts. I hope this experience of responsibility, courage, and cooperation will provide precedent as we move forward. As we begin this session, we may be tempted to relax a little, but we can't afford that. We still face fiscal challenges. And in public education, we need to address, in my opinion, our current policy for distribution of state funds, and our current structure of school districts. Some of this will not be easy or comfortable for many of you. But if we are to keep pace in providing outstanding educational opportunities for Nebraska students, and do so within the means of our taxpayers, we must move forward.