

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

February 10, 2005 LB 126

File, 2005 committee priority bills. Mr. Clerk, LB 126.

CLERK: Mr. President, LB 126, a bill introduced by Senator Raikes and others. (Read title.) Bill was introduced on January 6 of this year, referred to the Education Committee for public hearing. The bill was advanced to General File.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Raikes, you're recognized to open on advancement of LB 126.

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Legislature, LB 126 deals with the structure of school districts in Nebraska and specifically with Class I, or elementary-only, districts. The proposal requires the assimilation of Class I districts into K-12 districts beginning with the 2006-2007 school year. It does not require that any school building be closed. All that is eliminated are Class I school boards. Included are procedures for distributing property now in Class I districts, and for protection of attendance centers. This proposal is a committee effort. The effort began with an interim study before the beginning of last session, and continued with significant revision and advancement from the committee last session. I want to thank the members of the committee for their work on this important issue and for their very diligent effort in bringing this proposal to you. A bullet sheet outlining the details of the proposal is coming to you. I'll go over the bullet sheet with you as time permits, but first I will focus on the policy issues. The time has come for us to move to a K-12 organization of school districts in Nebraska. There are several reasons. First, we can no longer afford a structure that requires administration and budgeting of an extra 230 separate local government units. This is especially the case when these units serve very few students and provide the service at a cost per student that, on the average, is higher than in K-12 districts, and in some cases astronomically higher. There is not documentation that student performance is significantly better under this high-cost system, especially given the demographics of the students served, and there's little evidence that parents and students prefer this structure when given the choice. You are being asked to increase funding of K-12 education in Nebraska by nearly