

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

February 15, 2005 LB 126

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Smith, almost five minutes.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. President, Senator Langemeier. The trends in education today, I think, some are very positive and some concern me quite a bit. And it's not only the number of administrators in a district, but the public perception of education. We have a lot to be proud of in Nebraska with public education. I think we have a lot of hardworking teachers, one of whom is a close family member of mine, who's a bit frustrated, who's frustrated with all the reports, all the tests, and the pressure being put on someone who, the harder they work, doesn't matter, hoping that there are better test results, but there are so very few financial rewards, especially when we're caught in a system where everyone has to be paid the same. But I think there is some views of education in our state today that I think we should be concerned about. And I'm not opposed to home education. But when we see more and more and more parents choosing to educate at home, we need to realize there are some issues we need to address. I think the passage of LB 126 as it stands right now leads to more skepticism in education, more skepticism from parents. Any time you take away those options, parents are going to be skeptical. I just learned again yesterday where someone wants to choose their children to a Class I school, and drive several miles to do that. Now, I hope that it isn't held against that Class I school for being an example of quality education that attracts students from another district. If we build up those walls so high between school districts, we're taking choices away from parents, and we're taking those options away from students as well. I think of...I think it's a 5th grade class at a Class I school. They had a special fund-raiser. They did an exchange program to the East Coast. This class of, I think, eight 5th-graders, which is actually a large Class I, believe it or not, but this class of 8th-graders (sic) got to do an exchange to, I think, North Carolina, or South Carolina. They got that opportunity that they never would have gotten in a larger school district. And I know that there's some concern that these opportunities should not exist because not everyone can have them. But then that goes back to looking for the lowest common denominator in quality education. We can do so much better than