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FLOOR DEBATE

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with federal funds. Those federal funds are gone now and so there is a need to keep these two positions in the Department of Education funded. As we instituted No Child Left Behind, we really saw in places like tribal schools and ethnic populations where we had to struggle to make gains and to show improvements. We're starting off from a very low base in certain areas. Native American students have, you know, some of the highest dropout and lowest graduate rates of any ethnic group, and they're plagued with high incidences of suicide and substance abuse and diabetes and families that are not traditionally as supportive of educational efforts as other students in our state. We've seen dramatic increases in the last couple of years in the success level in places like the Omaha Nation School and Winnebago School and others in this state, and I believe that we need to continue to work to have that success supported, and I ask for your support of this amendment.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Connealy. You've heard the opening on AM2677. (Visitors introduced.) Discussion of AM2677, offered by Senator Connealy? Senator Stuthman. Senator Stuthman waives his opportunity. Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, I support Senator Connealy's amendment, and I would like to ask Senator Connealy a question or two.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Connealy, would you respond?

SENATOR CONNEALY: Yes, Mr. President.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Senator Connealy, what is...and I heard the general statement that you made about why you're doing this. If you had to focus on one major thing that would justify putting this money into the budget, what would that thing be?

SENATOR CONNEALY: The reason is because of the challenges that Native American students face and the need to move them up through our education system and to give them an extra hand. We see real challenges in Native American schools, but also in Native American students in here in Lincoln and in Omaha and in Chadron and other places around the state. We have a dramatic