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FLOOR DEBATE

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limits of Omaha--well, sort of. There are parts of OPS that are outside the city of Omaha, which would not be affected by the proposal; for example, Bellevue and the area northwest of Omaha, and there are parts of the city of Omaha that would not be affected; for example, the Westside School District. Note that consolidation of school districts was not a part of the proposal. All districts would remain. The statutory basis cited for this proposal is an 1891 law granting a Class V school district authority to operate the school district in a metropolitan class city. More generally, our state policy on school district organization is that the school district in the city has the prerogative to move its boundaries as the boundaries of the city move. The statute known as the Westside Exception is an exception to the general policy. Boundary determination outside cities is generally by agreement between the affected districts. The grounding for our one-city, one-school-district policy is that all of the citizens in a city should be called upon to support the public education of all the kids. We should not have separate school districts, for example, for the inner city and for the outer city. Also, we should not have multiple school districts within a small city or town. This policy is not common among other states, but I think it has worked in Nebraska. Although certainly not without controversy, it has been employed effectively, for example, in Lincoln and Grand Island. It has not been employed by OPS though, until the current attempt, and therein is a key element of the controversy. The OPS proposal would involve the takeover by OPS of about half of the Millard School District, the state's third largest. It would also involve the takeover of both buildings and area in the Ralston School District, and part of the area in the Elkhorn School District. If the annexation of Elkhorn by Omaha should occur, it is at least possible that most but not all of the Elkhorn School District would be taken over by OPS. Although not a part of the original proposal, there have been, as I understand, discussions between OPS and Bellevue about moving the OPS border to the city limits of Bellevue. The reasons offered by OPS for this proposal at this time were primarily the concentration of high-needs students in OPS, as compared to suburban districts, and the trends toward greater disparity and funding inequities between metro area school districts. The reaction by the impacted suburban districts was