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SENATOR SMITH: Senator Raikes, I apologize for maybe trying to insist on some brevity here, and I tried to listen to your opening, and I've been trying to go over this memo that was just circulated this morning, moments ago. But as I try to get a grasp of what this is about, I hope you'll bear with me. What would you say is the optimal size of school district, in terms of enrollment, numbers...the number of students?

SENATOR RAIKES: Optimum, Senator, as you I'm sure know, is a concept that would be based on your own view. I would say, based on my view, it's probably somewhere between...school districts seem to be effective all the way down to 300 or 400 students, maybe even a little bit below. They are effective above 30,000 students. Probably if cost per student is your criteria, our experience in Nebraska is that school districts in the 2,000 to 4,000 student range, as I remember, typically are the lowest cost-per-student school districts.

SENATOR SMITH: Okay, and then certainly we need to...I mean, there's cost and there's effectiveness.

SENATOR RAIKES: Right.

SENATOR SMITH: Is that...okay, so we need to balance the two. I fully believe that, and so I'm trying to say that, you know, creating a larger monster here, perhaps, doesn't necessarily even head in the direction of quality or effectiveness. And you may...you probably disagree with that, but that's my underlying concern, and that's why I'm trying to get my arms around this, not necessarily to strangle it, but to understand it. And I want to go through this, and I think this is an absolutely vital discussion that we have, and I want to be part of it. I know that I live about as far away from Omaha (laugh) as one can still live in Nebraska, but I also am part of this body, and I want to participate as much as possible. So I'll continue to listen to this and hopefully process this, and I hope that we can do something that is in the best interests of students and taxpayers, in that order, in that very close relationship, because I honestly feel that there's way too much that is being done in the name of effectiveness, but we're losing out along