

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

April 10, 2006 LB 1024

communities as they exist currently in Omaha. And there's good discussion about what happened in the late nineties with the end of busing in the OPS system and I won't address that. But I was concerned for that reason. And it is tempting to vote against the Omaha Public School system. I have hoped the entire session that OPS would sit down with the other schools and the other schools would sit down with OPS and there would this spirit of trying to find a solution. And here we are, the fifty-seventh day, no solution, and we're talking about the dissolution of our state's largest district. Yes, there was a hostile takeover. That bothered me. It seems to me, at times, lawyers are running the OPS system and it should be educators. But more than anything, and I don't know who to lay this on, it seems there's been some bad faith negotiation between the districts. And this problem is bigger than just school districts. Again, this is the view from the outside. This problem should be about affordable housing and public transportation and a long-term solution that makes affordable housing available in west Omaha, in Sarpy County, so that we have true integration throughout a two-county area instead of a concentration in the downtown, midtown, OPS district of Omaha. This problem, it seems to me, requires a systemic solution. It's easy for me to say that because I'm 30,000 feet above the problem trying to find something that's not going to bring this back in two years. But I don't think that dissolving the Omaha Public School system will make this problem go away. It requires a systemic solution. So where do we go from now? I'd like the school systems to come together and say no lawsuits, no boundary changes, a discussion of what can be done within the parameters, and find a solution that Nebraskans can adopt and embrace instead of spending our taxpayer money and foundation money on lawyers instead of kids. I don't like the idea of political subdivisions fighting out school boundaries in court because the Legislature has the plenary power to make that change anyway. And if we don't like what happens in court, we can come back ourselves and punish as we see fit. But I don't like the idea of punishing. I guess what I'm asking for...and this is a view from the outside and I will respectfully defer to the opinions of those from Omaha,...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.