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One Hundred and Twenty-Second Legislature

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Pages 1382 - 2139

The Chair laid before the Senate the following Tabled and Later (4/10/06) Assigned matter:

JOINT ORDER - Establishing the Joint Select Committee on Research, Economic Development and the Innovation Economy
S.P. 847

Tabled - April 10, 2006, by Senator **BROMLEY** of Cumberland

Pending - motion by same Senator to **PASS**

(In Senate, April 10, 2006, on motion by Senator **BROMLEY** of Cumberland, **READ**.)

On motion by Senator **GAGNON** of Kennebec, Senate Amendment "A" (S-624) **READ** and **ADOPTED**.

PASSED AS AMENDED BY SENATE AMENDMENT "A" (S-624).

Ordered sent down forthwith for concurrence.

The Chair laid before the Senate the following Tabled and Later (4/11/06) Assigned matter:

SENATE REPORTS - from the Committee on **EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS** on Bill "An Act To Update Teachers' Minimum Salaries"

S.P. 480 L.D. 1381

Report "A" - **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-577)** (9 members)

Report "B" - **Ought Not to Pass** (3 members)

Report "C" - **Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "B" (S-578)** (1 member)

Tabled - April 11, 2006, by Senator **MITCHELL** of Kennebec

Pending - motion by same Senator to **ACCEPT** Report "A", **OUGHT TO PASS AS AMENDED BY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (S-577)**

(In Senate, April 11, 2006, Reports **READ**.)

On motion by Senator **WESTON** of Waldo, supported by a Division of one-fifth of the members present and voting, a Roll Call was ordered.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Cumberland, Senator Turner.

Senator **TURNER:** Thank you, Madame President, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate. I'm going to ask you to oppose the motion before us and ask you think about its implications as it affects the property tax. It should be quite obvious to you that if you have school districts that are currently below the minimum and if you expend money to bring those salaries up to the

minimum, that all those steps in that school district will now adjust accordingly, either by opening a new contract or modifying an existing one. When that happens the additional tail associated with this action will fall disproportionately on the property tax. It is possible that in some cases that might be minimal. It is also possible in many cases it could be significant. If you happen to be in a school district that is already above the minimum I don't think you can sit back say that your school district is safe because by virtue of moving the minimum salary from \$15,500 to \$30,000, as this bill suggests, opens up the opportunity for renegotiation and new contracts in those school districts who have their minimum above \$30,000. On the back of the envelope calculation on the tail associated with this could be as high as \$50 million or more. That's not a figure that I can expand on for you but it is a figure that has been discussed around our committee as the Education Committee deliberated on this matter. We did some very good things with L.D. 1 fourteen or fifteen months ago. We used that vehicle to affect property tax relief and the engine that drove that was the EPS funding formula. We are now going to use that same mechanism to take property tax relief away from many of our citizens. I think that is a mistake. I don't have a better offer to make you this afternoon with regard to how we should handle this matter. I do believe this is the wrong way. I would urge you to vote against the motion, and I think this is something the Education Committee could deliberate on as we go through the end of this session and approach the 123rd. I think all of us will agree that there is a need to put more money into the classroom. I just don't think this is a very good way to do it. I think there are better ways that we could explore, and I would encourage you to vote against the motion. Thank you very much, Madame President.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell.

Senator **MITCHELL:** Thank you, Madame President and colleagues in the Senate. Forgive me for making a few educational analogies, but our committee and many of you have been looking at this bill since we came into session a year ago. I had a bill that came before our committee that talked about raising teacher pay. That bill was carried over because it was indeed complex. As the good Senator from Cumberland, Senator Turner, has pointed out, how do we accomplish this in a fair and equitable way? At the beginning of this year the Chief Executive announced that in his budget he was intending to raise the minimum teacher pay to \$30,000 and it would be funded out of the state budget, the difference in the pay for where teachers are now to get them up to \$30,000. Well, something happened along the way to passing that budget and that fell out of the budget. It was left for today's debate. It was left for us to make a separate and conscience decision on this issue. I have no quarrel with that. Later on, if we should get past this first hurdle, I will offer an amendment which reflects some of the money that was taken out of the fund for the \$30,000 and suggest to you that we don't have enough to go to \$30,000 in the first year but to go to \$27,000. I'm not there yet, I have to get over the first hurdle.

Please bear with me for a moment because here we are in the waning days of the session with what I thought was the most important bill that I sponsored when I came here almost two years ago. I am reminded of Shakespeare. If you can think back to your Shakespeare days and remember Polonius saying goodbye to Laertes when he was at the door when he was going away.

You've had this experience if you have children going off to college or someplace. You say all the important things while you are standing in the doorway. Remember he told him 'To thine own self be true' and all those other things you've quoted for years. Here we are, on the waning days of the session, and I'm trying to tell you everything that I think is so important about this extraordinary opportunity that we have here to set things right.

The other thing I want to say is about a bumper sticker I'm reading all the time. If you can read these bills, thank a teacher. I also know, and you know, that money should be put where our values are. I'd like to ask that we all think about, as we try to do the right thing today, who do you think is teaching our children? Obviously the parents are very important, but the number one item we should be concerned about paying adequate wages to would be the teaching force. If you pay people what I'm seeing on this paper, this salary, it seems to me we're having a different view of values. You can have the finest buildings in the world. You can the best busses to take the kids to school. You could even have laptop computers. You can have everything. I'm going to suggest to you that it would be very hard to attract and retain teachers, particularly in the rural areas of our state. Not very long ago we debated the labor market area. Many of you were lamenting the fact that not enough money was going into these small rural schools. Should we pass this bill today that is exactly where the money from the state is going to be going. I probably shouldn't be talking about that very much because from districts that pay more and don't get as much from the state won't be as thrilled about that. The money will be going to these towns.

I want to talk to you for just a few minutes, and I really apologize for taking your time but it is very important, about the last time the state decided that there would be a minimum teacher's salary of \$15,500, even I wasn't here then because I had stepped out for a while, was in 1987. That might sound pathetically low, but if you adjust it for inflation it gets up to \$20,000. Believe it or not, in state right now 62 of the 127 districts will be paying less than this adjustment for inflation. A person with a BA degree has a minimum salary in Charlotte of \$21,538; Caswell is \$21,200; SAD 14 in Danforth is \$22,279; SAD 70 in Hodgdon is \$22,477; Machias is \$22,477; and Southern Aroostook is \$23,000. This list goes on and it just rings all kinds of alarm bell to me. Very recently we heard about young people who can't pursue their dreams of teaching or social work or any of the traditional women's occupations because we can no longer say that your husband or somebody else can support you. You obviously have to make livable wages yourself. Think about the staggering amount of loans that kids are coming out of colleges with. Could you support yourself and pay back a loan on \$23,000 or \$24,000. I would suggest that you probably couldn't.

A few fact that are important to think about. The workforce in Maine is aging. The largest population age band for K-12 teachers is the 50 - 55 year old band. Second largest is 56 - 60. Retirements increased by 59% from 2003 to 2004. This is the saddest statistic: 44.4% of the teachers surveyed said if they were back in college they might reconsider their choice. Obviously it isn't all just about salaries because teachers teach because they love the kids. For no amount of money could you pay some people to go into a classroom and spend their every waking moment thinking how best to teach these young people and to bring them forward.

For my business-minded folks in this room, I'm going to share with you an Ann Quinlan article from Newsweek for a moment. This goes back to a November 2005 issue when Ann

Quinlan herself spent a day in a New Jersey classroom and was amazed at what people had to go through to try to teach the young people. This is what struck her. According to the Department of Education one in every five teachers leaves after the first year and almost twice as many leave within three. If any business had that rate of turnover someone would do something smart and strategic to fix it. This isn't any business, it's the most important business around. They are the gardeners of the landscape of the human race.

The final thing, if I could, and forgive my English teacher bent. I've waited a long time and I appreciate your hearing me out. In recent years teacher's salaries have grown, if they have grown at all, at a far slower rate than those of other professions, often lagging behind inflation yet teachers should have the most powerful groups of advocates in the nation. Guess what? We're not talking about unions. Of course, they are advocates, but it should be the parents and all of you former students. You should be the advocates for those teachers who brought you where you are as we sit here today. You may have read 'Angela's Ashes' and you may know that this gentleman also, Frank McCourt, was a teacher. As he left it, at the end of his book, McCourt, who is preparing to leave teaching with the idea of living off his pension and maybe writing, as you know 'Angela's Ashes' will win a Pulitzer, he's giving advice to his young substitute. 'You will never know what you've done to or for the hundreds coming and going,' he says, 'Ya, but the hundreds know, the hundreds who are millions who are us. They made us, we owe them.' I think this is truly a watershed moment for Senators of both parties in the State of Maine. It is time to vote in a positive motion to say that our teachers are some of the most important people contributing to the success of the state of Maine today. We can talk about economic development until the cows come home. Sorry, Senator Nutting. We can talk about all the things that really matter to us as we move Maine forward. The bottom line is you need good quality teachers and you need to tell them that you appreciate them. I would urge you to vote for the Majority Ought to Pass Report. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from York, Senator Andrews.

Senator **ANDREWS:** Thank you, Madame President and fellow Senate members. I'm going to ask you to vote against this bill because I think in actuality it could have a detrimental effect on educating our children. The good Senator from Cumberland, Senator Turner, talked about the tail that is going to be passed on for the teachers that are above that starting level. You all know we passed L.D. 1 and that means if you are going to go over your budget over a certain percentage you must go back and ask the voters. A number of years ago in York the voters turned down a large increase that would have gone for teachers' salaries. That cost the loss of 24 teacher positions. If you go with the increased salary, the contracts coming down go for the increased wages for all the levels up. If the citizens do not support that increase, that over ride, and that increase in the cap, the schools are going to have no alternative than to decrease the number of teachers in order to pay what they can. There are really long-range ramifications of this bill.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from York, Senator Nass.

Senator **NASS**: Thank you, Madame President, men and women of the Senate. My perspective on this is primarily from one from the financial side, the budget or whatever. It is somewhat disturbing to me that this came in as part of the budget at a time when we're all preparing for re-election. A few minutes ago we were just admonished not to make decisions based on political measures. I would suggest to you that this is very much a political measure. One designed to appeal to a certain group of people. It was my good fortune to be on a school board in 1984. I might disagree with the Senate Chair of the Education Committee as to the year. Perhaps 1987 was the year that the benefit was first obtained for teachers. We were part of a district that didn't pay their teachers very well. It did have a beneficial effect in slowly bringing that particular district's salaries up.

I believe today's decision is not about the salaries. It's about who makes the decision about the salaries. That is what this is about. I happen to believe in local control, especially on education. I think that has worked and has served us very well for a number of years. Certainly, if somebody else is setting your teachers' salaries you don't have much local control over education. There is not much left. The school lunch program, what you are going to serve for lunch. If somebody else is setting your salaries then why bother to come to the meetings. I guess that disturbs me the most about this.

It is true. Everything that has been said today by the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell, about teaching is true. Something more should be done. We should value these people more, but at whose expense? Who's to make that decision? That is what this is all about. I object to us doing it here. I don't think it's the right place to do it. I think the best decisions are done here. Besides that, we're not paying for it for very long. We're giving a token payment to this. Even in 1984 we paid for it for a few years in two or three different methods. I ask, and just perhaps more of a reminder myself, have we made some serious mistakes that we are seeing the price of right now? Look at how we treat teachers and school employees as far as their pensions go. The state is paying that cost. Look at what we're doing for healthcare costs for retired teachers. We're paying that. I would suggest that this is a big mistake we made a number of years ago. We've taken the responsibility of those payments away from the municipality that was supposed to control the schools and we're trying to do it up here. The folks that should bear the burden or the responsibility for that don't care about it anymore because somebody else is paying the bill and we're stuck with a problem. I would suggest that this is the wrong thing to do at the wrong time. We're not paying for it. Besides that, I represent a bunch of municipalities that haven't seen the benefits of L.D. 1 yet. They will see the benefits of this all right. The down side is that it's going to cost them more to pay for their teachers. Where the benefit of L.D. 1 went we could talk about all day long. There will be no benefit to them. Their property taxes haven't gone down. It's going to go up because of this. I would urge that you vote against it. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Androscoggin, Senator Nutting.

Senator **NUTTING**: Thank you, Madame President, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate. I know teachers made a huge difference in my life. I think probably most Senators here would say that. I've struggled with this issue. My concern is that EPS, our new formula in effect, in my opinion, locks in low teacher pay

in the property poor areas because you are reimbursed based on what you actually pay. If you look at the list of what each school is paying teachers now and the three SADs, SAD 31 Howland, SAD 29 Houlton, and SAD 70 Hodgdon, those SADs are paying the least amount per starting teacher. Yet those three SADs have the highest number of actual mills raised for education of any SAD in the state, all over 16 mills. My concern is for those areas because they haven't got any money from EPS and they have very low property valuation per student. It's the creep, so to speak, of the other salaries in those areas that might end up on the local property tax. That's my concern. On the other hand I've had numerous teachers in their first or second year call me and say, 'I went to college, graduated, got my degree, and I'm teaching. Should I be able to afford a house?' I'd like to say yes, but I know they can't at the current rate of pay.

As I've struggled with this, last week I kind of mapped out my own personal strategy. I'm going to be supporting this bill this year but only because I've already been to the revisor's office, and Madame President I checked to make sure this was legal, I've already filed a bill for next session to totally do away and eliminate the EPS formula because it is leading to inequities. I believe next year we can fix that formula so that these schools with low teacher pay and low valuations per students are going to begin again, as they did the previous few years, to receive more school funding money so that the creep doesn't end up on the local property tax. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Lincoln, Senator Dow.

Senator **DOW**: Thank you, Madame President. May I pose a couple of questions through the Chair to anyone who can answer?

THE PRESIDENT: The Senator may pose his questions.

Senator **DOW**: Thank you, Madame President. I notice that the starting date is June 30, 2006. Many districts are now going through salary negotiations. Some have completed them already. How would this starting effect those negotiations? The \$30,000 amount goes two to four steps up in the pay scale ladder in many districts. How are these districts supposed to rectify this problem?

THE PRESIDENT: The Senator from Lincoln, Senator Dow poses a question through the Chair to anyone who may wish to answer. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell.

Senator **MITCHELL**: Thank you, Madame President and colleagues in the Senate. I will try to answer the question. If I leave out something I trust that the good Senator will ask again. The question is, how will this work for this coming school year? I'm a bit in a box here because what I want to offer you is an amendment to the committee amendment with different things on it. We're not there yet. I will say this, were the \$30,000 going to be the number that we're talking about as the bill and the report talks about, let's say that you have four teachers making \$29,000 in your school. Your unit would receive \$4,000 to give each of those teachers another \$1,000.

While I'm on my feet, the amendment versus the report, this payment is intended to go on for these teachers forever. That is

the plan. It's a modest amount of money really because, fortunately, many of your schools, including the good Senator from Lincoln, Senator Dow's area, will not even be effected by it because his people have been paid already.

One final thing, I don't know about you, and I tried to tell you, but the advocate should not be just the union. Yes, they are advocates. Why shouldn't they be, that's their job. It should be the parents. It should be all of you. Frankly, I don't know what party half the teachers are in my district. The ones that came before the Appropriations Committee told stories where party affiliation knows no bounds in terms of repaying student loans or buying a house. I do respect that, but I want you to understand this funded for these people. What you are concerned about, as the good Senator from Cumberland, Senator Turner, is what happens to people above the minimum. The minimum itself is funded. It's those above it that you've concerned about, which is a local control bargaining issue. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from York, Senator Sullivan.

Senator **SULLIVAN:** Thank you, Madame President, men and women of the Senate. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Yes, I am a teacher. I wasn't going to say anything on this. By the way, I'm the fool in this case because I decided to stand up and speak. With 20 plus years teaching this is not an issue for me. In my first marriage my husband was a teacher. His first contract was for \$8,000. Yes, I am old. Not quite as old as a retired teacher in this chamber as of last year.

I want to talk a little bit about how do you say to a teacher at 22 years old that they've gone four years to school, and in many cases if they have not gone to the Land Grant College, it will cost them more per year to go to college than we are going to give them to work. That's hard. I've also stood in this chamber and I've listened over and over again to both sides of the aisle saying that what we need is more higher paying jobs. I submit to you that there are an awful lot of teachers, and people who are in college planning to become teachers, who are in college planning to come back to Maine. Not brain drain. They want to stay here. They want to teach here.

Many in this chamber have law degrees. Last time I looked that's running about \$30,000 to \$50,000 for undergraduate school. I know, I had a son that graduated. Wesleyan has much of my money. It's paid off. Believe me, he doesn't look at \$30,000 jobs. I also know that four years ago I stood in the other chamber and I listened to how we had a teacher shortage. You know how we decided to fix it? We lowered the standards. We're going to make it easier to be able to become a teacher. Amazing. Just go to the lowest common denominator. That's how lawmakers fix concerns? I would again admonish people not to make a political decision. This is about fairness. Do teachers deserve a decent pay? You all, every single speaker who has stood up, have said teachers don't get paid enough. You found a way to rationalize continuing to not pay them enough. I was thinking I might go into my doctor the next time and say, 'You know what, you make too much money. I think I'm not going to pay you what you think you are worth.' That is the message you are sending to teachers.

We never voted, except I do remember with the good Senator from York, Senator Nass, having a discussion over the laptops. I was one who stood up and said that if we were not going to put anything on the payment problem, how would we

funding the laptops? Well that was endowment and we never really got a chance to vote laptops up or down. They were just thrown at us. I want to tell you, it's no fun planning a lesson on laptops and that one little port tries to bring up 28 students and three of your computers crash. One kid has a computer that is broken and the other ones have forgotten them and I have no extra laptops. We passed laptops okay.

I suggest that we get through this, we support it, and maybe we come to a compromise. It appears there is one on the horizon. I will tell you as a member of the Teachers' Association, which is a dreaded union, that you would be amazingly surprised at how many members are members of the party that I am not. Bills need to be paid. People go to college because we hear that if you have a college education you will make \$1 million more in the course of your career, unless you are a teacher in Maine because we will continue to pay you less. We know you are worth more, but these are hard times. Having been a teacher for 20 plus years, and it was a second career for me, I have been through good times and bad times. Every time I hear that in good times we really need to spend the money on the buildings and things because when the times were bad we took away money. Of course we also hear that in good times and in bad times we can't afford to pay teachers. I'm just wondering when is teacher salary time? It's not during the good times. It's not during the bad times. You have a chance here to come up with a compromise, but we have to get through this first. I'm about compromise, as think our good leader knows. Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Oxford, Senator Hastings.

Senator **HASTINGS:** Thank you, Madame President and ladies and gentlemen of the Senate. I don't think there is anyone in this chamber that doesn't agree that teacher's salaries, especially beginning teachers, are too low. Everybody does. The real issue, to me, is who is going to pay for this and are we making a mandate, of a much larger sum than we might be suspecting, onto local school boards who might not be able to handle this? What we are going to end up is exactly what the good Senator from York, Senator Andrews, said, the loss of jobs. I did a little inquiry with my superintendents. My superintendents and school boards are not opposed. They are friends of teachers. They would like to see their teachers paid more, probably more than almost anybody in their districts. I asked them, 'Is this what you want? Do you want this bill?' They unanimously told me 'no'. Here's the impact. SAD 61 is one of the hardest hit districts by EPS in this state. Thanks to the good efforts of the Education Committee and the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell, we got some of that money back. They are still going to be receiving \$250,000 less next year than they received last year from state funding. As a member of a school board, I've negotiated teacher contracts a number of times. I'll tell you exactly the way it goes. You start off with a base and then you have an increment above that. It's all built on a ladder. You negotiate the base and then you negotiate what the increments are going to be, whether it's \$700, \$800, or \$900 between steps. It just flows through. Maybe in the first year the cost to a district is only \$15,000, \$30,000, or \$100,000 to bring those under \$30,000 up to \$30,000. Within a year or two that district is going face negotiations. I can almost guarantee you that the teachers' union, as they rightly should, will start with that \$30,000 number, or something slightly higher, as their base. They will not concede how big the increment should

be in between and they will demand, as their bargaining position, that they move it up to \$30,000 and then keep at least the same increment.

I asked SAD 61 what that would mean to them, if their whole salary scale was moved to a \$30,000 base and kept the same increments in the scale. It is now below \$30,000. It's going to cost them \$599,000. I asked that question of SAD 17 in Oxford Hills. If the same things happened to them and they just increased their base to \$30,000, kept the same increments, and plugged it into the scale it would cost them \$1,300,000. Those school boards, those superintendents, are friends of education, but they are already struggling to have their budgets approved by the local voters because they are exceeding their EPS number and having to ask for more just to fund what they are doing now. If the Lakes Region District has to come up with another \$600,000, perhaps half of that would be funded by the state in our funding, they would have to go to the local voters for this on top of what they are already asking for in excess. In Oxford Hills it's a much larger number, \$650,000. They are extremely concerned that the voters will not allow them to do this. The taxpayers are going to reject their budgets and they are going to have to do exactly what the good Senator from York, Senator Andrews, indicated. They are going to have to do the only thing you can do to reduce a school budget, they are going to have to lay people off.

We are interjecting ourselves into labor negotiations for salary scales that we're not paying for. Paying for it the first year is only the tip of the iceberg. As these contracts come due and they renegotiate, the numbers will be huge, in the multi-millions of dollars. I'm concerned that the backlash of this will end up in teachers being laid off. I have struggled with this too, but I've come to the conclusion that I should vote against this bill for those reasons. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Washington, Senator Raye.

Senator **RAYE:** Thank you, Madame President, men and women of the Senate. I find this an extraordinarily difficult issue. On a gut level, I want to do it. Wouldn't most of us? There is no question that teaching is perhaps the most honorable of all of life's endeavors. There is no question that teachers deserve to be well compensated. I am the son of a teacher. My mother taught in the public schools in Washington County for 38 years. I saw first hand the hard work. I can remember her sitting at our kitchen table correcting papers and preparing lesson plans. She worked hard. I know it takes dedication and I know that it takes a special kind of love because she loved the kids that she taught all through her years. She still does and they still love her. I appreciate I think as much as anybody can the tremendous value of teachers. I also appreciate the expression of concern by the good Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell, for rural schools and rural teachers. Yes, this legislation would, over time, result in an increase in the amount of funding that many of our rural school districts would receive under EPS but at a huge cost. Imagine the impact of these step increases up the scale. You are not going to come in and say to a new teacher that you are going to pay them \$30,000 without repercussions all up the scale for teachers who have more experience. Imagine the impact of that on the locally borne share of costs on these school districts, especially in the rural areas. Our taxpayers in these rural areas, by and large, are

lower income and they are already struggling to maintain their schools.

Bear in mind those taxpayers in the Machias area that the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell, mentioned. They have a median income that is less than half that of Cumberland and York Counties, \$11,000 less than the statewide average. Poverty rates are 60% to 70% higher. They do struggle and they are struggling. They are committed to their schools, but how many places where low-income populations are already struggling to maintain their schools might not be able to meet this new threshold. Do you want to impose school consolidation on the people of rural Maine? Do you want to close down community schools that are the heart and soul of a town? Do you want to exacerbate and inflame the two Maine syndrome? Then this bill is for you because you will accomplish all of that. If your concern is for the teachers in these rural and low-income areas that are struggling, you will not, in the final analysis, help the people you purport to be concerned about because many of them will lose the jobs they love. I cannot support this bill. I do believe it is well intentioned and has honorable intentions, but I believe the consequences of it could be devastating for many of our schools and communities in rural Maine.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Penobscot, Senator Schneider.

Senator **SCHNEIDER:** Thank you, Madame President. I had not intended to speak to you, good colleagues, this evening about this bill, but there are some things that have been said that I do feel strongly that need to be discussed further. First of all, I don't believe by supporting this bill that you are also supporting school consolidation. I think that is ridiculous. You are showing your support for educators. When I've gone around throughout my district often times, and these are people who are not teachers, people are asking me why we are not paying teachers more money. Yes, there are going to be financial repercussions, but we're all chipping in. I would submit that if you are that passionate about teachers and teachers' salaries then the next biennium, when we come back here, we should be supporting a bill that will help communities fund educators' salaries more appropriately because I am tired of hearing people talk a lot about supporting educators but then not anteing up.

I remember when I was interviewed by the Maine Teachers' Association. They asked me if I would support a \$30,000 annual starting salary. I said, '\$30,000, I'd support \$40,000.' I would like the State of Maine to kick that in. I do think that if we want good educating people to come forward to go into those professions we have got to start paying for it. Yes, it is going to cost us all. There is no question about it. When people have called me, angry that I would support such a move, I would tell them that it's the most important person in their child's life. They spend more time with the children than the parents do. The teachers and the educators spend more waking hours with children than the parents. These people are crucial to bringing education to our youth. They are crucial to the future success of this state and we have got to stop talking the talk. We've got to walk it and we need to start supporting our educators. This is one step in that direction of doing so. We've got to support it and I think that it is horrible if we don't support it. Thank you very much, Madame President.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Hancock, Senator Damon.

Senator **DAMON:** Thank you, Madame President, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate. I'm going to confess to you that I've been sitting here with my mind on something other than teachers' salaries. Listening to the debate, it brings me back 20 years or more when I had gone into that noble profession of teaching. As I listened to the concerns that have been expressed today, the concerns about the cost of paying our teachers, the concerns about loss of our local control, the concerns about what effect it's going to have on our schools, I can't help but think about the importance of education. In the importance of education is the importance of our teachers. We've talked often about education as being a key component to our economic development, as I might suggest transportation is. We have recognized the importance of education in those economic terms, but I would submit to you and ask you to consider education being a cornerstone of our national security. Our form of government, democracy, is, has been, and probably always be under some form of attack by people who don't understand it, by people who want to subvert it, and by people for all kinds of reasons. It is so vulnerable to attack because it is such a complex form of government. One of the reasons why it is complex and fragile is because it relies so heavily on an informed populist, a populist that is able to take in information, to assimilate it, and to make an informed judgment. That just doesn't happen naturally. I submit to you that it happens as much as it does, and in my opinion not as much as it should, because of teachers, perhaps the backbone of our national security.

As I get to thinking about the discussions that we've had just recently on this bill it takes me back, as I said, to the point when I was negotiating for the teachers in my school and then after I left teaching for a couple of years I was actually negotiating for teachers in other schools. It is absolutely correct that the expense that is involved for paying the teacher is difficult to come by. It is curious to me that back then, from the other side of the table, as adversarial sides, we had the side that my good friend and colleague from Oxford, Senator Hastings, may have sat on and the side that I sat on, the management side and the labor side. It was suggested to me, and to my side of the table, that we needed to increase the base pay of those teachers to get them to come to our area of Maine. That side of the table then recognized how important it was to get good young teachers into our schools. The proposal they came up with was not to take those steps that may ranged up to 10 at that point and simply move them all up by raising the base, but it was to raise the base and compress those steps because we couldn't afford all of the money that it cost to bring everybody up with that rising tide. We recognized that it was important to bring good young teachers into our schools. We couldn't do it by taking a pay cut, but we agreed to do it because we agreed to less of a step increase and we agreed to combine steps so that we could afford this. It was a good idea then. It may be a good idea now. Very prophetically, and very correctly, I think that you have made, in many cases, the argument that we can't afford to move that whole scale up. Would that we could, because each one of them deserves it. Realistically, we can't, but there ought to be a way that we can adjust this for these students, those graduates, those dedicated young professionals who want to start on that course that is sparking their interior, their soul, and their heart. We ought to be able to at least pay them a wage that in this day and age is not

unsubstantiated and not out of line. Unfortunately, I think that we recognize too well a teacher's passion, and a teacher's excitement about having that light bulb come on in that student or having that student say to them in later years that they were the reason why they went on to college when the rest of their family didn't, and that they were the reason why they did this or they did that. Those are the reasons, in many cases, that keep us going as teachers. Don't exploit that reward any more. Work to do what we can do to bring that base pay, I believe in two increments, up to the \$30,000 minimum. Let's make that work. I'll be supporting them. Thank you, Madame President.

THE PRESIDENT: The pending question before the Senate is the motion by the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell to Accept Report "A", Ought to Pass as Amended by Committee Amendment "A" (S-577). A Roll Call has been ordered. Is the Senate ready for the question?

The Doorkeepers secured the Chamber.

The Secretary opened the vote.

ROLL CALL (#455)

YEAS: Senators: BARTLETT, BRENNAN, BROMLEY, BRYANT, COWGER, DAMON, DIAMOND, GAGNON, HOBBS, MARTIN, MAYO, MITCHELL, NUTTING, PERRY, ROTUNDO, SCHNEIDER, STRIMLING, SULLIVAN, THE PRESIDENT - BETH G. EDMONDS

NAYS: Senators: ANDREWS, CLUKEY, COURTNEY, DAVIS, DOW, HASTINGS, MILLS, NASS, PLOWMAN, RAYE, ROSEN, SAVAGE, SNOWE-MELLO, TURNER, WESTON, WOODCOCK

19 Senators having voted in the affirmative and 16 Senators having voted in the negative, the motion by Senator **MITCHELL** of Kennebec to **ACCEPT** Report "A", **OUGHT TO PASS AS AMENDED BY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (S-577)**, **PREVAILED.**

READ ONCE.

Committee Amendment "A" (S-577) **READ.**

On motion by Senator **MITCHELL** of Kennebec, Senate Amendment "A" (S-620) to Committee Amendment "A" (S-577) **READ.**

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell.

Senator **MITCHELL:** Thank you, Madame President and colleagues in the Senate. A very brief explanation. This amendment, if adopted, would move the \$30,000 to \$27,000 for this coming school year. The money is in the budget under the learning assessment. The money is in the budget to pay for the \$27,000 so every district that needs that difference in financing will get it from the state forevermore. In year two it goes to \$30,000. That is the rest of the difference. It is a phased in thing. We can't obviously see into the future, but we have set in the

legislature that it is the intent that the state will continue to fund this piece. I will not draw this out any longer. My sterling oratory didn't change a single vote in this Body, but I do appreciate your letting me speak to you about my passion. I appreciate the heartfelt concerns that those of you who share a different point of view had. I appreciate the level of the debate. I think it's very healthy. I am reminded of the ink blot test where we are all seeing in this what we'd like to see. For my friends who are very concerned about the poor areas of the state and the consolidations, all of this money actually goes into the high receiving communities. It is the thing I spoke to you about that would move up into this, whether it is the EPS formula or the new formula that the Senator from Androscoggin, Senator Nutting, is going to devise. It will be going to those communities to help them get on that playing field so that they can also pay their teachers. The other things I would mention, as we worry about L.D. 1 and property taxes, the state is now committed to paying 55% of the cost of education. I say that it is time for us to say that our values are, as we are paying the 55%, paying our teachers. Maybe some of these superintendents, with all due respect, that were telling you how much it was going to cost them should look at their own salaries because there is a huge discrepancy between superintendent salaries and people making \$23,000. Having said that, I appreciate the kindness of this body in listening to this very serious issue. Wherever you come down, I know that you are all voting in a way that you believe makes most sense. I do encourage the adoption of this amendment.

On further motion by same Senator, supported by a Division of one-fifth of the members present and voting, a Roll Call was ordered.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from York, Senator Andrews.

Senator **ANDREWS:** Thank you, Madame President and fellow members of the Senate. Just a point of information, the good Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell, talked about how the state is committed to pay 55% of education. That's not true for every school district, so that needs to be clarified. There are many school districts that do not get 55% of their cost of education paid for. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes the Senator from Cumberland, Senator Turner.

Senator **TURNER:** Thank you, Madame President, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate. I will also try to be brief. It's difficult enough to debate the good Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell, but when she brings Frank McCourt into the discussion it makes it even more difficult. I'm going to ask you to oppose this motion as well. The poison is still there, it just comes in more slowly. Parenthetically, the comments made by the good Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell, with respect to 55%, that is 55% of the requirement to meet the Learning Results. We have many districts that spend above that and hopefully they get their money's worth. I think that perhaps they do. Certainly that is the case in my Senate district. Again, I would ask you to oppose the motion that is before us. Thank you, Madame President.

THE PRESIDENT: The pending question before the Senate is the motion by the Senator from Kennebec, Senator Mitchell to

Adopt Senate Amendment "A" (S-620) to Committee Amendment "A" (S-577). A Roll Call has been ordered. Is the Senate ready for the question?

The Doorkeepers secured the Chamber.

The Secretary opened the vote.

ROLL CALL (#456)

YEAS: Senators: BARTLETT, BRENNAN, BROMLEY, BRYANT, COWGER, DAMON, DIAMOND, GAGNON, HOBBS, MARTIN, MAYO, MILLS, MITCHELL, NUTTING, PERRY, ROTUNDO, SCHNEIDER, STRIMLING, SULLIVAN, THE PRESIDENT - BETH G. EDMONDS

NAYS: Senators: ANDREWS, CLUKEY, COURTNEY, DAVIS, DOW, HASTINGS, NASS, PLOWMAN, RAYE, ROSEN, SAVAGE, SNOWE-MELLO, TURNER, WESTON, WOODCOCK

20 Senators having voted in the affirmative and 15 Senators having voted in the negative, the motion by Senator **MITCHELL** of Kennebec to **ADOPT** Senate Amendment "A" (S-620) to Committee Amendment "A" (S-577), **PREVAILED**.

Committee Amendment "A" (S-577) as Amended by Senate Amendment "A" (S-620) thereto, **ADOPTED**.

Under suspension of the Rules, **READ A SECOND TIME** and **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED AS AMENDED BY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (S-577) AS AMENDED BY SENATE AMENDMENT "A" (S-620)** thereto.

Sent down for concurrence.

All matters thus acted upon were ordered sent down forthwith for concurrence.

The Chair laid before the Senate the following Tabled and Later (4/12/06) Assigned matter:

Bill "An Act To Require the Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices To Produce a Register of All Registered Lobbyists"

H.P. 1262 L.D. 1822

Tabled - April 12, 2006, by Senator **DAVIS** of Piscataquis

Pending - **ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (S-592) AS AMENDED BY SENATE AMENDMENT "A" (S-592)** thereto, in **NON-CONCURRENCE**

(In House, April 7, 2006, **PASSED TO BE ENGROSSED AS AMENDED BY COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" (H-822).**)