

SENATOR MARSH: Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Legislature, I rise to support the amendment which has been placed before us by Senator Kilgarin. This is an opportunity to separately express our concern regarding state employees. I smile at Senator Higgins for I have a feeling that the University and state colleges have heard the message about equity increases in salary for employees. I will be supporting this proposal. I am aware that there are many, many state employees who are very much in need of this increase as modest as it is. I also know that I feel that our economy is in the process of a turnaround. That will not work magic and it will not work overnight but I feel that we are on the right direction and that this is sending a message to our state employees that we value their contributions, that state government could not work successfully without their dedication and support. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Wesely for the second time.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. President, and members of the Legislature, I would rise a second time because I think that some further information may shed some light again on why we care so very much about the issue of state employees salaries. Senator Warner just informed me that the annual Personnel Department survey of salaries in which we compare state employees salaries to private sector salaries to get a sense of where we are at in terms of comparability, it shows us about 12% short of being in the range we ought to be to be competitive. That figure is up from 6% short last year I guess, and if we continue not to provide adjustments in salary it will get even worse and our competitive standing in the marketplace for the best employees will be difficult and our situation worsened. And you know that is really what we are talking about in this whole issue. We have got state employees who work very hard and I think put in great effort and should be recognized for that. We also have employees that I know are not doing the job and I think the thing we have to keep in mind is for those who are not doing the job that they should be dealt with in a separate fashion. They should be removed. They should be fired. They should be disciplined. But for those who are doing a good job and to deny them a salary increase for that effort because of a few that may not be I think is unfair and we have to deal with those questions separately. But looking at local subdivisions you will see that we have done some surveys that on the average we are looking at 5% salary increases. In the City of Lincoln for police and fire, they are even higher than that. For school teachers in Lincoln, it is 7½%. In Beatrice you are looking at about