

to run for office. Thank you.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Pedersen. Senator Jensen.

SENATOR JENSEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. President, and members of the body, I would just echo Senator Pedersen's comments. Yes, I did run for this office but I do have health insurance and I was able financially to do so. I think it is wrong anytime we restrict anybody or limit anybody from running for office because the benefits are not there that you would find in any other position. I haven't decided whether I'll vote either for this or against it but there certainly is something to be considered when we have staff that make twice and three times what the senators make and then also receive the benefits that other employees do have. We, here in the Legislature, certainly do put in the hours, not only while we're here but in the interim while we're not in session. The phone calls in the evenings, weekends, it's...you're always a senator whether you're either here or back at home, and so you give up something of your personal life and there is some compensation that ought to go along with that. The salary is minimal. But it is wrong to limit individuals who would like to serve but do...cannot because they will not have the health insurance or any other benefits that you can have in any other position. I really don't know how some of the younger people in the Legislature can afford to serve and it is wrong to only have elderly people, senior citizens, if I call myself that, to serve in this position. I think of Senator Witek, Senator Hall has a second job, and I know in Senator Witek's position she has an extremely high health insurance cost and she also has a...it's difficult for her and her family to make ends meet. And, certainly, if you do have an office like this, it would certainly be good to have the compensation that goes along with that in the way of benefits. I will certainly listen to the rest of the debate and then decide but I do believe that we do not want to exclude anyone from running for this position. Thank you.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Jensen. In the north balcony from Senator Wehrbein's district, we have 21 third and fourth graders from Hayward Elementary School in Nebraska City and their teacher. Would you stand, please. Senator Vrtiska.

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I just had a question for Senator Witek, if she would yield.