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Senator Brashear to open on LB 350.

SENATOR BRASHEAR: Mr. President, members of the body, I have likewise been approached on this bill by members. I think it is important to understand, as we all do, that we know this is the beginning of a process, that notwithstanding what the media is pointing out, and sometimes acts like it doesn't understand, we are all bringing worthwhile things to the attention of the body. The process requires that we do that, and there will have to be reconciliations. This bill needs to advance in order that it can be a part of that which the Governor and the Appropriations Committee and all others deal with as we come to the close. LB 350 provides for a salary increase for state court judges. The salary increase would be triggered as a result of the end of a term, or by the creation or existence of a vacancy. The way our statutes work, by changing the salary of the Chief Justice and the judges of the Supreme Court, all other judicial salaries are also increased. The salary increase that is provided for in the bill, as at present before you, is 4.5 percent in each year of the biennium. The increases are, for the salary of the Chief Justice and the judges of the Supreme Court would increase from \$101,649 to \$106,223, on July 1, 1999, and \$111,003 on July 1, 2000. Judges of the Court of Appeals are paid 95 percent of the salary of the Chief Justice and judges of the Supreme Court, and judges of the district court are paid 92.5 percent of the salary of the Chief Justice. Now, in addition to that, I would like to point out that even if the bill is to pass, given how we implement the judicial salaries, at the end of a term or upon the creation or existence of a vacancy, you should know that the Supreme Court will not receive their increase until the year 2001. The appellate court will not receive their increase until the year 2003. No Supreme Court member stands for retention until the year 2000. No appellate court member stands for retention until 2002. There's no raise for any of the trial courts that will occur until there is a vacancy. Most importantly, I would like to call the attention of the member of the body to the fact that two years ago, when I started this process and Senator Kiel completed it, we were ranked, our Chief Justice, in relationship to the Chief Justices of the fifty states, was ranked thirty-second. And notwithstanding the fact that you saw fit to provide for increases in judicial salaries two years ago, today our Chief Justice ranks thirty-third. So