

SENATOR RUPP: Mr. Speaker and colleagues, at this point I am tempted to just move to advance it, but I think I would be remiss if I didn't go into it just a little bit, maybe about three minutes worth. This is the first major rewrite of the Civil Service statutes in Nebraska. I want to thank Senator Withem and the committee, the Urban Affairs Committee and the staff because they probably at this point put in more work on this legislation than I have. I want to mention that it came out of Urban Affairs Committee. It was on consent calendar on a vote of 8-2, but it was removed from consent calendar. It is my priority bill. Senator Lundy and I introduced this on behalf of the League of Municipalities, and as Senator Withem said, several years of work have gone into this. So it is a complex piece of legislation, 36-page bill, and I won't attempt to explain it, but I want to just briefly touch on why I think we need it. First of all, who does it affect? Cities of the first class and Fairbury. These are cities over 5,000 population and Fairbury slipped under the 5,000 mark, but they still opted to have a Civil Service Commission, as is their opportunity, with full-time paid police and fire fighters. It does not include Omaha and Lincoln and I think it is important that you all understand that early on. Why do we have Civil Service laws? Real briefly, to afford due process for employees of municipalities, to prevent arbitrary and capricious, or arbitrary or capricious hiring and firing of police and fire fighters. I think in the old days we have heard situations especially down in the southern part of the United States where a mayor would be elected and immediately fire the entire police or fire department and hire relatives. This is the whole reason this came into being in the early 1940's. This is not a typical labor management confrontation and I want to bring that to your attention. There are three groups of employees involved. As Senator Withem mentioned, the POAN or the Police Officers Association of Nebraska support the bill, testified in favor in committee. AFSCME, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees support the bill. They include the Beatrice and Fremont police officers and Nebraska fire fighters who support most of the bill, but there are two areas of contention that we will discuss later on Select File, I understand. Briefly, why is this needed and why did I introduce it? I will give you one horror story that happened in Columbus, Nebraska and there are many that I could give you, but Columbus demoted a police officer, I think from Captain all the way down to