

do they have just cause, but to have to prove in addition that the reason that they are doing this is not because of the filing of an allegation of wrongdoing with the public counsel. It puts an additional burden on the state. I mean...actually I'm not even sure how the two fit together because the state already has to prove just cause for firing somebody. If they can't prove just cause, and certainly reporting to the Ombudsman would not be just cause, they can't prove their case anyway. I'm really not sure why, except for the additional proceedings and additional trouble, I'm not sure why it is important to Senator Landis.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Well, under the bill an employee would report anything that they considered fraud or waste, mismanagement. I presume those things are defined in the bill.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Uh huh.

SENATOR HIGGINS: And they report them to whom? To the public Ombudsman and anyone else?

SENATOR BEUTLER: The bill has two aspects. They can report it to the Ombudsman, which they currently have the power to do by the way but they don't have all the protections that Senator Landis has built in for them, or they can report it to what is described and identified and defined as an official in the bill. An official means any elected official, as I recall, and that means you or I also.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Senator Beutler, I just dictated a letter to the Governor, yesterday, suggesting that we put away \$5,000 a year for government employees, to reward them any time they find government waste, anywhere from \$100 to a \$500 award, or any time they come up with a suggestion that saves the state money in some method. This bill, I think, is designed to do somewhat the same, except that it does not reward the good employee who comes up with an innovative idea on how to save money. I think it is a good bill. I think it should pass. I think the employer should not be placed in jeopardy, or the supervisor, whomever. As you recall on my nursing home bill I wrote the same thing that, number one, you could not harass an employee who reported a nursing home to the Health Department. But by the same token I had in the bill that the Health Department could choose to ignore any of those complaints that seem frivolous