

SENATOR ABOUD: Mr. President, colleagues, I think this bill has a lot of similarities to the budget debate that we've had the last few years in regards to the amount of increase that we take from the constituents in the State of Nebraska. Now we spent a lot of time debating whether to have a tax increase, increasing taxes, whatever, 2, 3, 4 percent, or whether just to leave the budget as it is. I remember last year, considering the special session, we had virtually a zero increase in the budget. Now with...the similarities are such that if we support this bill with the DeCamp amendment we are in fact insuring increases in telephone bills of at least 10 percent for local rates. Now I don't know how you feel about it. Senator Schmit touched on the fact that some times constituents do get upset when you vote for things that cost them more money, and the fact that sometimes, occasionally, state senators don't...aren't able to come back after a four year term because of certain issues that upset constituents. And I am of the firm belief that is what really happens. If the issue is volatile enough, then they can in fact...it can result in their defeat. Now I feel that this is one of those bills simply because we're going to be insuring that a phone company will be allowed to increase their billings at least 10 percent for the local rate. Now you have the situation, at the present time, with the Public Service Commission where the Public Service Commission is the one that takes the heat for these increases in telephone rates. Now even my...I've been involved in looking at telephone rate increases and I've felt that sometimes maybe the Public Service Commission was a little bit lenient on allowing certain increases to be billed to ratepayers in the Omaha area. But the heat that was taken was all taken with the Public Service Commission. They were the ones that had to say, well, we are going to allow the billing to increase whatever, 10 percent, and they were the ones that got all the telephone calls from the constituents saying that there is no need to increase it that particular amount, there is no need to increase the profit of a phone company to that extent. I think that is a pretty good system. I think there is a nice situation right there where they act as the judge, and they look at both sides and they say, well, maybe this year they need this much money, or maybe this year they don't need quite this much money. But we're not saying that here. With this particular amendment we are saying no matter how much money you spend, no matter how much money you increase your top executive salaries, no matter how many nice things you buy