

will be able to make faster determination as to the telephone rate increase being justified. Now last year I had a piece of legislation that was passed by this Legislature and that provided for interest payments to ratepayers that are overcharged because of an automatic increase that goes into effect during an interim period by the phone company. Now it has always been a bone of contention by the phone companies that the amount of time that the Public Service Commission takes is detrimental to their best interests, and that may in fact be so, but according to the present restraints that have been placed on the Public Service Commission by lack of staffing, they just couldn't make a determination when they had to go through reams and reams of information and they had to look out for the best interests of the public. So they had to take that amount of time to look at it. It is my belief that if we do provide this additional staffing to the Public Service Commission that they will be able to make a faster determination as to what is in fact a proper rate increase. With that I see benefits to both sides and I urge this body to adopt the amendment. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Schmit.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President, and members, I will try not to get into any kind of a personal engagement with my good friend Senator DeCamp, and try to answer questions that have been raised which I think the body needs to have answered and which possibly they deserve to have answered. I want to point out that there are a number of competitors for long distance rates. That has already been established, number one. Number two, there is the opportunity and has been and will be in it in the future under this bill the opportunity for additional competition if those companies wish to compete in those long distance areas. One of my principal concerns has been that there has not been the opportunity for competition at the local level, and I want to just point out a few things. One of the comments that Senator DeCamp made was that there would be \$400,000 in new taxes imposed under the proposal that we would impose a 50 cents per year fee on access lines to fund this, about less than 5 cents per month. I would suggest that that is a far cry from the proposed 2.50 per month rate increase that could be implemented under 835 without any kind of a PSC approval. I would suggest that also you remember this, the 400,000 is utilized to fund your own public employees, people who work for the taxpayer and the consumer of the State of Nebraska. That money is used to hire competent people. I want to ask you, I want to ask you this question in all honesty, and