

vacancy savings in the Legislature. We budget a fully staffed...for all senators to be fully staffed and they are not and with that savings we apply towards a merit pay plan. With this amendment, what you would be doing directly, with today's amendment indirectly at least, which is not, at least not quite as bad as it's been happening and we have not been budgeting specifically for it. Now, many, many agencies come before the Appropriations Committee and, in essence, requested for the whole body to fund us a merit pay plan over and above what is bargained in relation to LB 661 a few years ago. We want a merit pay plan over and above that. And time and time again we say, no, because you have a bargain agreement, you live with that and it simply doesn't make sense if you're going to have a merit pay plan over and above that, then you ought not to have it. Now what Senator Warner's amendment would do is it...right now we have budgeted a 3 percent raise for all legislative staff effective July 1 and 1.5 percent effective on their anniversary date. Senator Warner's amendment took that up to 5 percent on the anniversary date which is in adherence to what has happened in recent years. But, as I said, it takes a special appropriation to do that and, therefore, this Legislature,...

PRESIDENT MOUL: Time.

SENATOR MOORE: ...by the way we treat our own employees, would fund it and create a merit pay plan that would soon, in my opinion, be copied throughout state government and be a very costly venture.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Moore. Senator Chambers, followed by Senator Hall and Hefner. Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Madam President and members of the Legislature, this is a matter that the senators should pay attention to because it relates to what we think of our staff and what we feel constitutes fairness. First of all, Senator Moore knows good and well the unique relationship between legislative employees and the senator. There is no way you can draw and on all...they call it in law being on all fours if two situations are just about the same. Senator Moore, can the head of a state agency dismiss an employee for no reason at all?

SENATOR MOORE: (Microphone not activated) ...what the employee is, usually not.