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LB 357

amendments, Mr. President.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Brashear, you're recognized to open on LB 357.

SENATOR BRASHEAR: Mr. President, thank you. Members of the body, LB 357 is a judicial pay raise bill. Provides for an increase in the salaries of the judges of Nebraska. I have filed an amendment, but in this introduction I will speak as if that amendment is before you and then just briefly summarize it when we get to that point. It is our role to review judicial salaries and it has been our practice, as with other employees for whom we are responsible to provide for regular cost-of-living adjustments for our Nebraska judiciary. That policy ensures that we maintain high standards, that we have qualified judges, that we are paying them appropriately. You all know that our judges are not permitted to practice law. Because of the code of responsibility under which they operate, they are severely circumscribed in terms of any ability to supplement their income and, in order for us to attract and retain qualified judges, which are very integral part of our society and of our system of justice, we must pay them appropriately. Please recall that what we do is we establish the salary of the Chief Justice and the justices of the Nebraska Supreme Court and then we pay a percentage of their salary to the other judges. We pay 92.5 percent of the salary we establish for the Supreme Court. We pay that 95.5 percent for district court judges, for Workers' Compensation Court judges, and for Separate Juvenile Court judges. Our county court judges are paid 85 percent of the salary which we establish for the Chief Justice and the justices of the Supreme Court. At current...currently, that Supreme Court salary is \$111,003. It is proposed in LB 357, as amended, to provide an increase in the salary of those justices to \$114,358 beginning July 1 of 2001, beginning July 1 of this year, and an increase to a total of \$119,276 beginning July 1 of next year, 2002. That increase would be 3.1 percent of the judges' salary for the Fiscal Year 2001-02, and 4.3 percent for Fiscal Year 2002-03. While I do not intend to belabor, I hope you agree inordinately, the details, I think it is important that the record reflect that we are being responsible in advancing this bill, if that be your