

potential of being even more controversial and even more of a political football than judicial salaries does, yet we do that in a rational and intelligent way. Now, let me just review for some of you who are new members how this issue came down two years ago when Senator Pirsch and ten others of us were all down here as freshmen. Now, believe me it was a political football like you have never seen before. It was in the Judiciary Committee for six or eight weeks, and Senator Reutzel and Senator Chambers kicked it around inside the Judiciary Committee back and forth, all around the table. They brought accountants in. They projected out the salary requests made by the court and they said at this rate by the year 2100 you are going to be making \$7 million each. Press releases were going out three times a day. I mean, people really had a heyday. It was just great. And then it came out here on the floor of the Legislature, and did it stop? No, the political football was teed off again and it bounced around inside this Chamber for six weeks. It came up time and time again, and as I sat there, all I thought is, you know, what can we do to depoliticize this issue to handle it rationally like we handle most other salary issues in this body. Now, everytime the political football got kicked around and battered around why people would stand up and make more harsh, extreme statements about the judiciary, about pet peeves they have with judges going back fifteen or twenty years, and Ed Howard would go back to his old room and clatter it out on the wires and out it would go, and it would appear in newspapers around the state, and believe me, it didn't do our system of government or anybody any good. It consumed a lot of time unnecessarily and I think all of us agree there are many, many better ways of handling these particular issues. We don't need to turn judicial salaries into political footballs. We have got plenty of other things to turn into political footballs if we want. We have got the Omaha sales tax issue. We have got the litter tax issue. We have plenty of political footballs around. You know, why choose one that is going to damage and cut into the fundamental operation of our democratic society? We need to treat the courts as independent entities. We need to treat them with dignity. We need to remember that the number one objective is to get the best people possible to serve on the judiciary, and that we have all sorts of other methods of accomplishing these other goals, Senator Chambers' interest in redistricting, Senator Johnson's interest in changing the Merit Selection System. We write all the enabling legislation. We deal with their appropriations. There is no need to send out the message that we are going to hold their salaries hostage.