

Legislature for good reasons. The reasons are still good today. Understandably the economy has slowed down. We have to understand that, but the salary increase that we are talking about for state employees is not unreasonable especially in these economic times. I think many state employees after the last discussion several days ago called me and wrote to me and contacted me and very much grateful for the efforts that we undertook to try and keep a salary increase. They understood that they couldn't expect more than what is already in the budget. They felt that it was understandable with the economy slowing down they shouldn't ask for more although they felt they probably deserved more because the work that they do and the fact that they feel they are underpaid compared to other salaries in comparable positions in the private sector and in other public employees situations. So it was clear that they felt that they were underpaid, that they were not adequately compensated as it is, yet they felt that understanding the economy that they would be more than grateful for this small increase that we are now including in the budget. They weren't asking for more. They were just asking for what we were providing to them but they certainly weren't asking for less recognizing their relative status, recognizing the fact that they, too, have to pay some bills and the fact that inflation is still there, and it was tough enough as it is, let alone looking forward to a year with no increase whatsoever or at least just the small increase we are talking about was a very bleak outlook for them and I know many of them were very, very discouraged. And when I talked about the morale of the state employees last week, I certainly found out from response that that morale is indeed slipping and the problem that they have already is compounded by talk about almost no salary increase at all for them this coming year. So I would say let's at least give them some encouragement, some hope for a little improvement in their situation with the 3.75% increase and not support the Peterson amendment which we again rejected last week and should reject again this week. It made sense then. It makes sense now. I oppose the Peterson amendment.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Vickers.

SENATOR VICKERS: Mr. President, I understand the serious economic situation that we are faced with in this state and I think it is appropriate that we all share in the attempts to hold down the cost of government but I am very curious as to how people might vote on this issue and Senator Peterson, who is offering this motion, was not here last Thursday but I offered an amendment last Thursday to take \$500,000 out of the budget for those amounts of dollars that we are going to use, we, the Legislature, in