

the staff, as it currently is, to keep up with these, to file, make the entries that are necessary and then also to keep track of the cases that are pending, the disputes, the petitions that have been filed with the Workers' Compensation Court. The third page of that handout clearly shows that there has been a...almost a 33 percent increase from the '86-87 year to the '87-88 year with regard to the number of petitions that have been filed. And the fourth and fifth pages show you the number of petitions pending at year end and the backlog with regard to caseloads in the area of the Workers' Compensation Court. This is an appropriation to the Workers' Compensation Court that amounts to roughly a \$100,000. It, I think, is very much needed. The court serves a vital purpose. They must maintain and keep track of the injuries that take place, the filings of the reports and then they must also keep track of the petitions or the cases as they are pending. I think that if you look at the history since the early eighties, they have had little or no increase in their number of employees when they...except for last year and I think that it's very much appropriate that at this time we increase their staff by roughly about, oh, I guess it would be somewhere around the neighborhood of 7 percent. They currently have 28 employees over there; seven of them are judges, 21 are support personnel. This would be two additional support personnel that together would only be roughly in the area of \$34,000 a year. They are very much needed just to help maintain the workload to do some of the tasks that keep the office functioning. You look again at the first page, you see that the tax, although this is not a cash funded program in the true sense of the word, the premium tax flows into the General Fund but it more than offsets the cost of operating the Workers' Compensation Court. Mr. President, I would urge the adoption of the amendment to LB 813.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Coordsen, please, followed by Senator Hannibal, then Senator Warner.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, and members of the body, I was not aware of this amendment until Senator Hall told me about it yesterday but I was aware of the problem because all of the Workers' Compensation Court measures generally come through the Business and Labor Committee. It would appear, though I do support the Hall amendment, it would appear that perhaps in the last session of the Legislature we may have made a...not an error but a misdiagnose of where the problem of backlog in the Workers' Compensation Court was at. We did