

CLERK: Mr. President, 225 was introduced by the Appropriations Committee. It asks the Legislature to investigate all...asks the Legislature to direct the Governor and appropriate administration officials to investigate all options to secure continuous health insurance coverage for state employees.

PRESIDENT: Senator Hannibal, are you handling that?

SENATOR HANNIBAL: Yes, sir. Mr. President and members of the Legislature, Legislative Resolution 225 comes to you from the Appropriations Committee. It is a response to a problem that we have had, and I believe most of you are aware of it, with our health insurance program between the state and the state employees. As most of you are aware, Blue Cross-Blue Shield is the carrier for our health insurance and they have experienced some losses, presently, with the current contract, and there is a real question as to whether they will continue to enforce the contract that starts this coming August, and whether under the terms of the contract that there is sufficient revenues available to make it a good contract for both parties. They have approached the Legislature through the Appropriations Committee and approached the administrative side to look at the contract and to decide whether there are ways to improve the contract for both parties. We, as a committee in the Appropriations Committee, suggested that this resolution would be our response. The resolution does suggest that there could be a problem and maybe there is a problem, and that the ultimate responsibility for this problem rests in the administrative side through the State Personnel Office, through the Governor's Office and other appropriate bodies, and that they look at the ramifications of the current contract, look at the option, and the possible consequences of pursuing the contract as it is presently written, and make a determination as to whether the contract ought to be opened up again, renegotiated, or other possible options, and that we, as a Legislature, suggest that that final decision rest with the executive branch. The resolution suggests that we place that responsibility in their hands and give them the ability and the authority to try to work out the situation to the best possible resolution with regards to state...with regards to state employees, and with regards to the insurance carrier. I would be happy to respond to any questions. It has been a long-time issue for us in the committee, and we think that the resolution, LR 225, is an appropriate response, and I would urge the adoption of the