

PRESIDENT: Senator Schmit. Senator Landis, are you going to handle this or Senator Schmit? Okay, Senator Schmit, please.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President and members, LB 42 is a bill which I introduced, along with Senator Ashford, and I believe Senator Ashford is here also, and is a bill to increase the salaries of judges. As you know, our judges' salaries have to be approved by this Legislature and the Legislature has historically taken an interest in providing equitable compensation for the members of the judiciary. At the present time, the salaries for the judicial members of government are in the lower echelon of salaries across the United States. All of us have heard the various arguments for salary adjustments for constitutional officers. We have heard the necessary arguments for salary adjustments for individuals of the university and other state employees. We have made some substantial adjustments in those areas and we are offering here a substantial adjustment also. I just want to say that we know that the judicial system is only as good as the individuals who are empowered to enforce those rules of the court. We know that if we are going to have equity before the courts, we have to have good minds on the bench. We know that we spend many hours on this floor in an attempt to try to bring about some sort of justice relative to the statutes. We enact many statutes into law and those statutes are only as good as the court system which then sees to it that those statutes are enforced. We have had many arguments on this floor over the years relative to judges' salaries. We recognize that there are many times when we find an individual citizen who has had an unfortunate conflict with a judge and bring it to our attention and perhaps the conflict of interest or the comments about the judges, if they are negative, may be in some cases justified. All the more reason, in my opinion, for us to try to find some equitable compensation for judges which will allow judges to participate in their profession without the problems of monetary concerns which might, in fact, even impede their judgment. As you know, judges are prevented from having outside employment. They cannot take other and they cannot accept other income and they are confined to the income they receive from their profession. I know that many times we have had appointees or we have had individuals who have...would have made excellent appointees who have declined to take an appointment to the bench. I have had a number of individual lawyers speak to me about their concerns in this regard. I have had a number of lawyers, in fact, speak to