

Abboud, Senator McFarland, Senator Landis and any who are aspiring to be attorneys to vote for this amendment. And those who are aspiring, I will not call by name because sometimes sanity takes hold before too late, but I'm hoping that this amendment will be adopted and if it is, not only will I support the bill across the floor by voting for it, I will speak in favor of the bill.

PRESIDENT: Senator McFarland, please, followed by Senator Schmit.

SENATOR MCFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. President, sometimes it's difficult to maintain composure and your seriousness in some of these debates. The idea of the 20 percent raise wasn't just pulled out of the air or out of the nitrogen. The idea, when, as I understand it, when people looked at what a reasonable increase would be was that a 20 percent increase will put Nebraska's judicial salaries in the middle of the 50 states. That is approximately where we were several years ago. We were paying judges at about the 24th, 25th, 26th rank statewide in comparison to other states. The 20 percent increase in this bill would put Nebraska back in the mid-range of states paying judicial, as far as paying judicial salaries, so there is a basis for it and I think there is a reasonable basis for it. I think Senator Schmit was very ambitious and very forthright and very sincere when he brought this bill to the Legislature. Senator Schmit is not a lawyer. It is not a lawyer's bill. He is a senior member of this Legislature who has been here for a number of years, saw the need to increase judicial salaries because we are ranking so far behind other states and Nebraska doesn't need to be at the bottom in comparison with other states in this area. As a matter of fact, Nebraska doesn't need to be at the bottom of states in any category. We should be proud of our state, proud of the people who serve as public servants, proud of the people we represent in our state as a whole, whether that be teachers or employees or state workers or professional people, we ought to be proud of the type of people we have in our state because we have a wonderful state and wonderful people to represent. It seems to me that the 20 percent is a fair, mid-range point to go to. We have been delaying any increase for far too long. We have an economy that is in fairly good shape now. We have a General Fund that is in fairly good shape. It is only appropriate that that increase and that injustice of the lack of salary increases in the past now be remedied. I would like to address one minor point before