

SENATOR SCOFIELD: Thank you, Mr. President, and members, I would offer, at this point, the committee rationale for where we ended up at and probably just say, this one's for you, Bernice, although I'm not...I'm always amazed that you really qualify as a senior citizen. The committee, as I mentioned earlier, the request, the total request, and Senator Smith has also pointed this out, the request is for a million and a half. At the time the presentation was made, they...the agency did not have the minimum wage amounts calculated and, frankly, I think had the committee heard that they probably would have seen this, I can only speak for myself, the committee, contrary to what some of you believe, has not powowed on this issue, I think the committee probably would have seen this as a reasonable request and the dilemma we were faced with was simply how generous could we be at the time. So when this particular piece was attached to the committee amendments as a part of the committee amendments, and I'm glad you recognized that we did increase that, Senator Smith, we didn't have that increase. It is a...at this time what's in the committee is the veto override amount from last time. So, basically, the committee's rationale largely was we simply didn't have that proposal before us to deal with at that time and, obviously, you are all free to decide how you want to expend your piece of this. I share some of the point...the beliefs, I guess, that Senator Smith expressed as far as the cost effectiveness of keeping senior citizens in their homes. This is not a program that anybody would want to argue against particularly. We do, I think, have a frustration that all of us share sometimes with federal mandates that come down and ask us to spend money on things that we might prefer to put it elsewhere. I guess in terms of just offering you one...one piece of advice at this point, in case you haven't bothered to refer and I'm just doing this myself, if you refer to the back of the green sheet before you, as well as the committee information, you know we have \$8 million right now built in the budget for ongoing expenditures. And so it's a good time for you to think about where you want to spend your combination of that 8 million, assuming you accept the assumptions that's based upon. And so the committee rationale was simply we didn't have those numbers before us at the time and...but I would caution you to start totaling up your numbers so that whatever you put together doesn't go over that 8 million. But I think we have an obligation to the senior citizens and we also have an obligation to kids and somehow we've got to make this balance so we don't make the tax burden so bad on those that are paying for it that they can't carry it.