

legislative staff any raise. And, presently, it is included in the budget, increase of 3 percent on July 1 and 1.5 percent on the anniversary date, just like all the other state employees. So legislative staffers are not treated worse than state employees, they're treated the same until you adopt this amendment. Senator Chambers, your argument about legislative employees are the only ones that serve at the whim of their boss, that would also hold true for all employees of the constitutional officers, Governor, State Treasurer, State Auditor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, although there are some personal policies that have been adopted arguably there, whether they're still in place, I do not know, as well as the Policy Research Office. Those people serve at the whim just like the staff people that work for us. And so, arguably, if the tit-for-tat carries through, you would have to generate and grant the same increases for those people because they have to work under the same circumstances as you are, so, obviously, you could argue that level of combat may be a little different but, nevertheless, the same holds true for them. Just a simple example is, are you going to lead by example here? We have asked state government across the board to take a 2 percent cut. We have asked state employees, saying we don't have the money to even fully fund your bargain agreements, and then we turn around and, in essence, grant ourselves immunity from a 2 percent cut here and, in essence, we fund our own staff well above anybody's bargain agreement, even better than the one they have out in Kearney, and I just...as badly as I want to reward our worthwhile people and if I have any staff left when I get back to my office, I want to give those increases too but you cannot just ignore the precedent that you're setting, coupled with the fact that many agencies that come back do exactly this, develop a merit pay plan through the use of vacancy savings, then they come before the Legislature and ask us to recognize in funding what they have done through the back door. And, in essence, the Executive Board over the years has done exactly that. The precedence is indeed a horrible...I don't know any other way to put it, but, yes, Senator Chambers, those people are deserving, yes, they are, and you, I guess, yourself and members of the body will have to weigh out which is more important; with me, yes, they are important but the precedent it sets is of such magnitude I don't think it's wise for the body. So, with that, I would urge the body once again to oppose the amendment.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Moore. Senator Chambers.