

SENATOR SCHIMEK: That is okay, Mr. Clerk. Mr. President and members of the body, I have got to catch my breath here a minute. If you recall on General File on this bill, I informed you that there would be an amendment pending on Select that we could discuss, and you were good enough to go ahead and move the bill to Select with the idea that this would happen. Let me just refresh your memory a little bit about the bill. If you recall, it arose out of an instance that occurred during the Orr administration when she installed a telephone in her office for the purpose of receiving and making any calls that might not be directly pertaining to government, that might be considered political in nature, and paid for those out of campaign funds. The Accountability and Disclosure Commission ruled that she could not do that, and Governor Nelson and Mark Hunzeker, from Kay Orr's campaign, both came and testified on the bill, 722, actually, Governor Nelson, not himself but a representative, and urged its support. So I would like to suggest that this a bipartisan bill; that there is interest in it from both sides. After the hearing last year, it was decided that perhaps we needed to do an interim study on it, and it was suggested that perhaps more than just political phone calls needed to be discussed, but phone calls that state employees in general make from state telephones. This has always been a matter of interest and of question because, technically, if a state employee calls his or her spouse for any reason at all to say they are going to be held up or Johnny is not going to be home from school on time, or whatever, technically, they are breaking the law. So we suggested that we should have a hearing. We had a hearing on it this summer. My staff gathered information from eight surrounding states, actually two of them were not immediately surrounding. One was for Georgia, and one Virginia, but the rest of them were right in the immediate area. And I won't bother to go into all the information that we received from those states today, but out of that hearing and out of that information comes this amendment. And, basically, the amendment addresses two things. The hearing, at the hearing, it was suggested that the bill, as written, was too broad. And if you will look on page 3 of the bill, on subsection (2) of Section 1, it does say that you could make expenditures or transfer funds for the payment of office supplies, staff, and furnishings, or devices located in an officeholder's public office, and used by such officeholder pursuant to subsection (1). It was felt, after a lot of discussion, that this was too broad, that, in effect, an elected official could set up a campaign out of their