

amendment provides for a pretrial conference. So I'm going to run through what the amendment does. The committee amendment would make several changes. First, the Worker's Compensation Court would not have to charge a sales tax for the medical fee schedule. It currently does not charge the sales tax, but there is a possibility that this may be required without a change to the law. Secondly, the committee amendment changes when the...amendment changes the time when the Worker's Compensation Court is required to review its medical fee schedule. Current law requires a yearly review. This amendment would require a biennial review. The amendment also allows the Worker's Compensation Court to appoint a court reporter to transcribe the hearing and initially requires the employer or the insurer to pay for the reporter. The court reporter's charges shall be taxed as cost and whatever side has to pay the cost will have to pay the court reporter charges. If it is the employee, then she or he will have to reimburse the employer or insurer. This portion of the amendment gives the Worker's Compensation Court the option of apportioning the cost between the parties, awarding the cost to one of the parties or paying the cost themselves. Fourthly, the Worker's Compensation Court would be able to hold pretrial conferences to consolidate issues for trial under this part of the committee amendment. A judge or a Worker's Compensation Court staff attorney may hold these conferences and they can hold them over the phone. The Worker's Compensation Court can charge the party for any phone charges. Finally, the amendment allows the Worker's Compensation Court to correct plain errors made in a case if such correction is done within ten days of the original Worker's Compensation Court decision. To elaborate just a little bit on the problem that has evolved over the last several years, there are in the neighborhood of 70 to 80,000 work related injuries in the State of Nebraska during the course of any year. The majority of those are settled between the injured party and the employer or the employer's insurance company. But there are cases, a number of those, which an agreement is not able to be reached between the parties. It has resulted in an increase in the number of cases filed and a corresponding increase in the backlog and the time that it takes for an injured party to receive a resolution in their case and receive benefits if they are so entitled or payment of their medical cost if the court finds that they are entitled to do so. Currently, there are about 1,300 cases being held on appeal for first hearing and about 250 or thereabouts, depending on how much action has been taken recently, being pending for the rehearing within the court. Again, I would