

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Madam President, and members, just briefly. This matter came to me this summer when some representative of...representatives of parking interests in and around the airport area came to me and expressed, through Don Adams, came to me and expressed some concerns that the Airport Authority was going to charge...begin charging fees for parking buses that utilize the airport facility and expressed to me their concern about that practice. Then, after that, I was approached by the Airport Authority and...the Director of the Airport Authority, and he indicated to me their concern about this issue from a legal standpoint and showed me several cases that had...several cases that had been litigated throughout the country where private interests off airport had attempted to enjoin the collection of fees by Airport Authorities and those cases seemed to indicate generally that such a practice was not...would be prohibited by the courts, in effect, that the Airport Authorities could, in fact, levy those fees. He expressed also to me his pledge that he would sit down and work with representatives of these private parking interests to try to carve out some kind of a settlement of this matter. Then this bill hit the Legislature and it did not have...or at least it came in as an amendment, as Senator Will suggested, did not have a public hearing. There is somewhat of a precedent, in my mind, to this dispute and when the...with the People's Natural Gas versus some of the, you know, some of the private heating and air conditioning contractors got into a dispute about subsidization of services by people, some that had competed with the private sector in providing heat and air conditioning services, the service one controversy, and I believe that was resolved by the parties this year and Senator Will took...played a role in that, or maybe it wasn't, I don't know. But, in any event, it is...we have the same sort of thing. We have a dispute between private parties and a, in this case, the Airport Authority. I'm sympathetic to the concerns of the private interests involved in this matter. I know I have received some letters from the rental car companies and they have expressed a great deal of concern that if the parking lots, private parking interests which some of these rental car companies have, as well as their rental car business, if they have parking lots, have expressed a concern that if the parking lots are charged a fee and the hotels and other users that provide pickup service for...for passengers at the airport are not charged a fee that that would be discriminatory. And, certainly, on the face of it that seems to be accurate that there might be some