

SENATOR AVERY: Thank you, Madam President. One thing I wanted to do is clarify the record a little bit and I guess in our conversation before I had indicated that these individuals would be men. It was brought to my attention, and I think it would be any individual and women would just as well be qualified for that. But in terms of...one concern that I have is that the commissioners...here we are establishing another level of government and I think it's a good process and I think it's something that possibly is needed in lieu of our tax situation and our valuations that are staggered in terms of not equal across the state and within each of the counties. But I do have concern of establishing these and I see some wording in here and maybe Senator Kristensen can further confirm that, but in terms of salaries and benefits, these individuals would be constitutional officers in terms of...that would be like, employees, Senator Kristensen, if you'd yield for a question?

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Senator Kristensen.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Yes, I'll respond. They're not constitutionally created. They would receive...as I told Senator Maurstad that I picked out a salary level. I picked that of a county judge, trying to determine maybe some area of comparable responsibility but I'm not tied to that, but in terms of that they're going to basically be treated as such, I mean they're going to be a state employee for all practical purposes.

SENATOR AVERY: So in terms of the benefits, while they're here, I think maybe just for the record, the type of benefit, would they...retirement, we're talking about they serve for a term. Is there, you know, if there is a benefit, maybe that...I just wanted to try to get it clarified for the record.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Senator Avery, the legislation doesn't identify a particular benefit package or retirement system at all. What it does is set their salary and say they're going to get necessary expenses and then I refer to a section of statute that is the usual necessary expenses, you know, the travel reimbursement, but that is not specified in here as to which retirement system they'd be under and those sorts of things.

SENATOR AVERY: Well, I do get concerned in terms of the retirement process. We put individuals in retirement and when you have a defined benefit plan which is one that I think many states and business try to go away from and it's more on a