

I think it makes much more sense to have engineering firms doing that type of thing in contrast to putting staff on maybe only for a short time for expanded road projects, particularly when you're not clear as to your funding sources.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: I had to ask that question because I thought you said the hiring freeze doesn't touch these people.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: No I didn't. It doesn't touch the con...the consultants I don't think, I said, would come under the hiring freeze.

SENATOR HALL: One minute.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: It would be your day-to-day workers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: So all of these over...these several hundred private engineers would not...they're all considered consultants?

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Well, because they're hired for a specific job. Yes, like...I mean if you hire a lawyer to represent you in court, would you have him on his staff or would he be called, you know, your attorney or whatever. An engineer would do a specific job for a specific issue on a specific price.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: If they have 109 engineers and they have to hire between two and three hundred, wouldn't it make sense to put some of those on regular staff since (interruption)...

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: I don't think so necessarily, no, because road funds are too uncertain. It goes more by projects, it goes by weather, it goes by availability, it goes by the fact if we raise the gas tax or not. All of those things are fairly uncertain so you can't really plan. It's just like we're doing the temporary worker issue. That's why I believe that most of this makes good sense.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Isn't it true that the road program is basically...

SENATOR HALL: Time.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: ...untouchable?