

one of our expanding or growth agencies, quote.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Okay. Thank you, Senator Wehrbein, and again to continue on the questioning, what was the discussion in the committee and in regards to the philosophy this year of negotiating a contract but basically then in what I would call proposing an unfunded mandate? That is we are mandated to obligate the contract we signed but we're not going to fund it through general dollars. We're, in fact, going to make agencies pay for part of that funding through reductions, which may be layoffs at their agency. What...what...you think that will be a continuing policy that we'll continue to do as far as a financial mechanism? And the second part of that question if we have enough time, otherwise we'll get to it... Well, let's just take one at a time. What was the discussion on that policy question as it was presented to the Appropriations Committee and then, after you answer that, I'm going to go to the next question of, how did the committee then respond to that and what things did you do to agencies that would have helped them so they didn't have to layoff people in order to fund their contract that they agreed to?

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: Okay, first of all, I don't know of anybody that's going to have to layoff people because of the salary issue. We looked at this so that I think that's part of the reason that we did fund these in entirety, many, because we were conscious of a possible unfunded mandate; that it would be irresponsible to automatically make them eat it if they did not have the wherewithal to do so. So we looked at that in the light of the fact that they...

SENATOR CROSBY: One minute.

SENATOR WEHRBEIN: ...could afford it, if it was in their cash flow, if it...if it truly fit within there and would not have to lay any...would have to lay someone off or not. The second question was just...

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Well, you answered the second one first. The first question actually was...was...was there discussion on whether or not this is a good practice for the State of Nebraska to begin to continue, that you negotiate in good faith a contract but we do not...we do not, in what I would call good faith, fund it with General Fund dollars, we actually pass...pass some of that obligation off to agencies.