

SENATOR CROSBY: Senator Avery.

SENATOR AVERY: Madam President, members, I guess at one time or another we have to start looking at, as Senator Wehrbein said, it is balanced but is it really balanced? We have obligations, I think, we've told our cities, we've told the communities, we've told counties, all governmental entities that they must cut back and not increase. In looking through the budget, and I'm specifically looking on page 16, when you look at the overall General Fund expenditures, you have several situations there where the total percent increases are quite drastic. We tell all other entities to keep the budgets down, try to keep within what is the normal growth factor which generally is 3 or 4 percent. Now, I'm well familiar and I very much appreciate the Appropriations' work, hard work on the budget, but I do know that once you go through that process and you get the various agencies and all individuals coming in, some of them almost in tears, that you're taking away their funds. We have to be responsible, I think, too, to the voter and the taxpayers. My amendment starts out and I don't think I'm totally picking on anything, I looked at the 44 smaller agencies and, in combining their budgets, they only have about a 2.3 to a 2.4 percent increase in the two years. With that in mind, I said we need to try and look at the increases in these other areas. And, starting out, my amendment proposes a 3.5 percent increase for the state college system, for the biennium, each year for the biennium, so you're going to have a 7 percent increase over the two years. The university, which has about a 19 percent increase, I have proposed a 3 percent each year, totaling a 6 percent for the biennium. This total amounts to about \$25 million. I think this is one step we can make in the right direction to balance and set the example, as we are supposed to do, in terms of let's not, let's just take the budget and allow the Governor to veto. That's shirking our duty. We have... I think it's our responsibility to put out a budget that we are comfortable with. We can be an example to the other governmental entities in the state. So I do believe this is the...really, the fiscal thing to do and responsible thing to do. I do appreciate, again, what Appropriations has went through but, in that process, I know the pitfalls firsthand. So I would take any questions and hope you could support a proposal like this. And I also, further, I'm putting this out, there are other alternatives, but I'm trying...we have to try to attempt at this time to get it within what normal growth is in the