

combining several different ideas in one constitutional amendment. Senator Withem has a bill, I think, that we'll hear later this year that increases the salary for the Legislature to around \$16,000, a little bit more than that, and I don't have that bill number right in front of me. But the last time that the Legislature got a salary increase was the year that I came into this Legislature, it was on the ballot the same time that Senator Crosby, and Senator Lindsay, and some of the rest of us were running for election for the first time. Prior to that time, as most of you know, the salary had been \$4,800 per year. So it took 20 years to get that salary increase. And I would just like to see some mechanism for making that either a more regular, automatic kind of increase, or at least providing some other incentive for the voters to provide that salary increase, so at least it keeps up with inflation. I think it makes it very difficult to recruit candidates, makes it very difficult for people to consider serving in the Legislature, particularly those from outside of the Lincoln area, for those from the western part of the state who have to come in, who have multiple expenses in serving in the Legislature, I think it's very difficult. And if we don't at least keep up with inflation, who knows what. If we would adopt Senator Withem's bill this year, and if we would put it on the ballot, chances are it wouldn't pass anyway. I mean it took a concerted effort last time to get such a change, and a lot of groups were involved in it. I think a lot of frustration had built up over those 20 years that we were not able to pass a salary increase. So it's just a suggestion at this point. I'd like you to think about it. I very definitely support the concept of the bill. And we can argue about whether it should be 65 days, 75 days, or whatever, but I do think that we could probably conduct our business in a shorter amount of time, especially when you look at what some other states do. I think in Texas, for instance, a big state, a huge state with a large population, they meet only every other year. And I just would ask you to consider this amendment which limits the number of bills that can be introduced to 12, by each senator, and consider it in the spirit in which it was offered, as maybe a mechanism in which to attach several different issues to one constitutional amendment. Thank you.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Schimek. Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I'd like to ask Senator Schimek a question. Senator Schimek,