

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Would it be also fair to say that this amendment would not be in conflict with the committee's position on treating higher education fairly?

SENATOR BRASHEAR: It is fair to say that, at least in the minds of one or more members of the committee.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Senator Brashear, I thank you very much. And members need to understand that these are very touchy questions that you ask and Senator Brashear has been very open and very kind in those remarks. But in essence what we know is that the committee last year put the dollars into the community college because of the fairness issue. They couldn't do salaries and other things and not treat others fairly. And so the dollars were put in. We also now know that there was some confusion on the committee about whether or not it was put in or not. Now whether or not they would have ever gone back and recognized the confusion and made a change will never be known. But the fact is some felt that it was already in the budget. But the key thing that I want to point out is even this amendment today is not inconsistent at all with the reasons for why the Appropriations put the dollars in in the first place and that is it was a fairness issue. It was one of equity, and I don't see anything that has changed between last year and this year with the exception of we have to go to this process to maintain that fairness that the Appropriations agreed last year was the thing to do. Thank you.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Bernard-Stevens. Senator Maurstad.

SENATOR MAURSTAD: Thank you, Madam President. To provide a little more history, last year when this issue came up, I brought the issue to the committee and the committee did eventually accept and include the amount in the budget. As been previously indicated, the Governor vetoed it. As previously indicated, we overrode that veto. And at the time that all that was going on, there was a great deal of talk in that we would look at including those items that were overrode in the budget this year and attempt or at least attempt to put them into the budget again this year. And basically the Appropriations Committee, a majority of them, not me, but a majority of them was willing to take that risk in going and fighting for those overrides again as we go through the budget process this year.