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PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: One minute.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ...that we have some additional assurances that if we make a mistake that it may not be as serious as we think it would otherwise be. Now I'm not...I don't want to suggest those numbers to you in any sense that I don't believe that we need to very carefully follow the actuarial study, but you do need to be aware that there is a component in the valuation of the plans that causes the actuary value to be less than the actual value of the assets on any given date. Again, I will pledge to you that if the actuarial studies do not...would show that we would have a General Fund impact, that I, and I suspect, as I've indicated, with Senator Wehrbein and Senator Stuhr, will bring proposed changes to you so that we do not have that impact.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator. Further discussion on the committee amendments, Senator Stuhr.

SENATOR STUHR: Thank you, Mr. President and members. Just a couple of points that I would also like to bring out that the cost of living provisions of this bill are the first of their kind for our state-sponsored retirement plans, and they will provide members of the state patrol, the state judges and the school retirement systems ongoing COLAs each year of retirement, and as has been indicated, this means that we do have an ongoing commitment by the state to ensure that funding is adequate, and that's why we're being very cautious in proposing these measures to you. Currently, another point, currently the annual change in the consumer price index is less than 2 percent per year, therefore, sustaining the COLA right now will not be as difficult as it might be if inflation would exceed 2 percent in the future. The permanent floor of 75 percent of the purchasing power of the member's initial benefit, however, does contribute to the cost of this commitment. Plan members and school district employees are helping to pay for the COLA by prefunding the COLA benefits during their working career with annual contributions to the plan. However, once a member retires, the cost of the ongoing COLA will be borne by the state, and if there are actuary losses in the plans. So just again emphasizing that the school retirement system is very adequate,