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it's been unsuccessful. It has not just arisen. We have had some notice of these problems coming. But I will tell you that Director Wagner tells me that there hasn't been a way of achieving his objective in the last couple of years. Now, that may be because of the strategy the administration's used in negotiation, or because of the state employees. I don't know. But we have had notice of the problem. The director has been trying to work on it for a couple of years. And for whatever reason, without placing blame or responsibility, it hasn't occurred.

SENATOR PREISTER: Okay. I appreciate the answer to that. It is not only in this area. There are likely other areas, including the nursing situation in some of our veterans' homes and other areas. It's a very legitimate problem, and we do have concerns about how we address that. It's my understanding that in this last contract negotiation, there were some incentive pays or some adjustments made for some of the nursing staff, to provide for this kind of a situation. But I'm not sure that this particular one was even part of those discussions in the contract negotiations. So although you say that, yes, the problem has been developing over a period of time, and yes, the director has been aware of it and trying to direct some kind of efforts to finding a solution, do you know if this was even brought up in the last contract negotiation as something that the union and the administration could work on to find a solution? And I don't know if you know the answer to that, but to the best of your knowledge?

SENATOR LANDIS: Thank you. The information that I've been given would not answer that question exactly. And I think it's a fair question to ask. I was given a little description of what the administration and the union had done in the last round of the big conflict. I'll read it to you. But it won't give you a specific answer on these 25 employees. This year, the administration negotiated proposed salary adjustments by bargaining unit, because steps are no longer comparable. And these are the step plan that we have, with 16 steps in it. And the union declined. So they didn't...they couldn't do salary adjustments by bargaining unit. And that's even larger than this group of 25. There was discussion of eliminating steps,