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FLOOR DEBATE

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other people who did the same work throughout the state. When it came time to discuss it, however, the argument from the state employees, quite logically, was you've made this adjustment for Omaha, it happens to be a 10 percent increase, now make it for the rest of the state. Problem is that there is a big distinction between Omaha and the rest of the state. A road maintenance job outstate is something that people hold onto for 15 or 18 or 20 years because the jobs aren't that common, and the salary rate isn't that high. Now, look, there is plenty of underpaid state employees and road maintenance workers are among them. But what the labor movement wants to do is generally to point out that there are broad groups of people that are underpriced and underpaid, and at the moment of negotiations, they are likely to say, you know what? It's true these people are underpaid and let's bring to the table a number of other people who are underpaid and demand that they be improved. The cost of doing this one for the bargainer...for the examiners in Insurance and Banking Department, well, we'll be happy to agree to that, but we also want you to agree to these 500 employees over here. It makes perfect sense from their point of view. It's entirely legitimate as an expression of their interest. However, it raises the price tag and it makes the problem very muddy. What you cannot assure me, Senator Beutler, is that the solution point is these examiners only. You can't tell me what the price tag is. You can't tell me that it won't influence General Fund money as opposed to the money from the industry. And the reason is, it's a pretty open-ended messy process. This is a rifle shot. It could be off. I think one's value could say it's inappropriate. But I will say this, that one cannot be assured of what these results will be going through the negotiation process. And I think it's very legitimate and appropriate, by the way, to expect that the labor union comes in and says, this problem is not alone. We'd like general funds to pay for a rather large number of other un...underappreciated and underpaid...underpaid employees. And therein lies the difficulty of going down that path at this time. The short answer to your question is it could be done. It represents...

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN: One minute.

SENATOR LANDIS: ...and agenda that can broaden and expand and