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LB 760

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, I was forced to just file a dummy amendment. This amendment that's up there right now is not really the one I'd like to put in front of you. It is being prepared. It should be here momentarily. But I can describe to you what the amendment does, and we can have a little more discussion on LB 760, and hopefully the amendment will be here in a couple of minutes. LB 760, you may recall, is the bill that allows for additional court fees to be assessed, for a variety of purposes. But the two purposes that I'm concerned with right now are the Education Fund and...to which was allocated \$1.00 of court fees; and the Dispute Resolution Cash Fund, to which was allocated 75 cents of court fees. Now, the purpose of the Education Fund was to be sure that there would be adequate funds for educating judges and other court personnel, and generally, in the future, to have sufficient funds for general education of court personnel. The amount of money that's raised by that dollar fee is about \$360,000 for each year of the biennium, or about \$720,000. The other fee that's involved is the court resolution fee. And that particular fee was in the amount, I believe, of 75 cents, so it doesn't raise quite as much money. But overall, about...between 1.2 and 1.3 million dollars extra money is being raised over the biennium for the court system. And it's raised with some broad language in it right now, that would not only allow the court system to use it for those purposes, but it would allow the court system to use it for other general operations purposes. And the money that's being saved in the General Fund amounts, over the biennium, to about \$400,000. So they're raising over 1.2; they're saving us \$400,000 in the General Fund; which means there's about an \$800,000 increase for the two-year period to the court system. Now, wasn't the intent of this bill to enhance the General Funds appropriated by the Appropriations Committee by \$800,000? But the purpose were some specific limited purposes. And to the extent that there is more money there than serves those purposes, then at some future point in time, the Appropriations Committee ought to have the ability to further reduce and transfer from those cash funds, if they're not needed for their specified purposes, money to the General Fund, and supplant, again, some more General Fund money. So when the amendment gets here, the purpose simply will be, with respect to the cash fund for education, to be sure that it's