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FLOOR DEBATE

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not an expert in every one of these agencies. I don't claim to be. I did not sit in on every hearing. And so it would be presumptuous of me to say that I know best in every one of these agencies how much money they can best function on. But I do know that the Governor and his staff spent a great deal of time going over the needs and going over the resources and trying to allocate them in the way that they best felt it could be done. And so I think it's very important that on this round of debate we talk about those numbers and why the Appropriations Committee felt that they should change some of them. And I am not faulting the Appropriations Committee in any way. I believe their job has been very, very difficult, just as our citizens' job has been very difficult in this economic downturn. The Redfield-Bourne amendment handout that you have, prepared for you by the Fiscal Office, tells you the bottom line on the amendment that is before you. Actually reduces the General Fund by \$4,899,141. That's the bottom line. All weekend long, these experts have been looking at these lines, trying to find any glitches, making sure that everything fit correctly, and making sure that we were not negating any of the other work that other bills created. That's why you will not find here things like TEEOSA. You will not find here public assistance. You will not find here the Forest Service, which has been taken out so that it...or I should say put back in, so it is clearly there and established. So we have tried very, very carefully to walk around those other issues that we have made policy decisions on. But it goes to the heart of the matter, and in the green copy and the comparison with the white amendment that the Appropriations Committee offered, and it goes...does go back to those original numbers. If you look at economic trends, I follow the Workforce Development numbers every week, and I have passed those out to you...or every month they come out, and I watch those very carefully. And I wanted to draw attention to you the statewide average hours and earnings. Because it's not enough just to look at how much you earn per hour. It's very important to see how many hours you can work in a week. And so I just highlighted at the bottom, the top and the bottom, for you so that you could see. In construction, while you saw that the hourly earnings at \$17.40, actually was \$755 a week. By October of 2003, that same worker was only making \$14.85 an hour, and only getting 38.6 hours a week, meaning that they were