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FLOOR DEBATE

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SENATOR JANSSEN: One minute.

SENATOR BOURNE: And you're saying, the way it's drafted, that that cannot happen.

SENATOR FRIEND: Right. And that's one of the concerns that I actually discussed with staff members, that because we are...this almost is a trade-off, that we're saying that these firefighters would rather have the opportunity to reap the benefits of their, you know, of their, I guess, the type of pension that they're creating here, that they'd rather have that unfettered by IRS intervention, I guess, and then take their, you know, chances at having a second class city go bankrupt, I mean, which like we all hope that's not going to be the case. But the obligation is the city's.

SENATOR BOURNE: And unlikely that it would. Senator Friend, thank you for your patience in answering these questions.

SENATOR JANSSEN: Thank you, Senator Bourne. Senator Connealy.

SENATOR CONNEALY: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I was on the Urban Affairs Committee. The first time we tried to pass this bill, it actually had state funds in it, and it had, you know, a state benefit that would go out to volunteer fire departments. And I was in support of that then. We didn't put that in place, so we put a smaller program in place to allow cities to structure a benefit for their volunteers. And what this refining of this act does, it allows it to fit with federal code and it also leaves an opening there if the fire department or the city gets in trouble that we can use that funds. I don't think that will happen ever. If it does, then I think that ought to be part of this, because it is a benefit for a volunteer and it is not obligated for these cities or these fire departments to do this. Now they're doing it if they have the resources and if they have the ability to give this benefit to try to attract firefighters. We have a graying population, especially in rural communities, of firefighters, and it's tougher and tougher to get them to come out and do the work that they need to do to protect us all. And any benefit that we can give...if we could do it on a state level, I'd like to do that,