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introduced.) On with discussion, Senator Don Pederson.

SENATOR D. PEDERSON: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. I, too, agree with what Senator Synowiecki has said. And by the way, he has been a really good member of the Appropriations Committee this year. I think they've all been good, but I think he brings an expertise in a lot of areas and I appreciate his service on the Appropriations Committee. So we were faced with an issue of how are we going to handle the various providers. And each one of them has a compelling story for additional funds. So we don't run out of needs and desires for additional money. And we felt that particularly in light of the fact that the Governor had provided zero for all of these, it was appropriate that we look to the history of the various providers and what they had received and what they had not received. And we found there were two classes of groups, as Senator Synowiecki has referred, and the one group had been receiving periodic, perhaps small, but periodic increases in their monies, but there was a group also that hadn't received anything since 2001. And we felt that there was a good dividing line in that respect. So we did decide to appropriate 2 percent for those who had received some and 3 percent for those that hadn't received any. And every one of them could tell us and show us and did, to a large extent, their needs for more monies than we were providing for. But we felt we had a restraint as far as dollars were concerned. So that was our form of equity. We were trying to be fair to the various providers. Now what changed the fairness that's alluded to by Senator Byars? And he has legitimate reasons for concern, as we all do, for all of the providers. But in his particular case he's talking about the people who are getting a 2 percent raise and what causes the difference. The difference is that when it was a negotiated salary change for state employees it was determined that the salary for state employees be 3 and 3.5...or 3.25 percent; 3 this year, 3.25 percent next year for the salary. So there we have the disparity between the salary that was awarded by the negotiation process for generally for state employees and what we had provided for the providers such as Senator Byars. But I think it all boils down to dollars. And with the 2 percent providers, we gave an increase of \$8,700,000 this year and \$16,900,000 next year. And this, you see, is one of the very