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LB 478

SENATOR PREISTER: Thank you, Honorable President, friends all. I stand in support of the committee amendment and then, if that's adopted, Senator Cornett's bill itself. I think it's important that we make the distinction because the committee amendment obviously has differences from the bill, but they take two very differing approaches. Senator Cornett did her best. She came into the committee championing the cause of providing a benefit to all retired veterans in the state. She was organized. There were, I think, nine or more testifiers that were there in support of her concept; no one who opposed it. She was continuing a tradition that Senator Hartnett started of introducing this legislation, and he was unsuccessful, having served here for 20 years, of getting that bill even out of committee. Senator Cornett did everything humanly possible to get the bill, in its original form, out of the committee, and she certainly worked on each committee member. She did her homework. She was organized. Just as she has handed out an organized packet of information that we have here on the bill now before each of us, she did in the committee and to those committee members. But she's also a realist. She knew that the bill, in its original form, was not going to advance from the committee, partially because of the fiscal note and the amount of money that we would be losing in revenue. That was one of the reasons that it couldn't make it out this time and part of the reason it has not made it out in the past. The second reason is a fairness issue, and Senator Engel was talking about being fair. Well, if we did forgive military retirement income then, Senator Engel, should we also do the same for retired police officers and county sheriffs, because they, too, put their lives on the line for us? And then should we also do it for firefighters? They, too, put their lives on the line in protecting us. We begin then to go down that road of forgiving a host of other deserving individuals their retirement income from having put themselves between us and harm's way. So then we lose a tremendous amount of revenue and, yes, Senator Engel, we could not afford to do that. The fiscal note then grows higher. So the committee has chosen year after year not to advance the bill, and that was the same dilemma that Senator Cornett was faced with. But we are in the position this year of doing economic development packages so, realistically, to try