

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

May 19, 2005

LB 348, 643

what our judges are paid, compared with other states. We have recognized our constitutional executive officers with salary increases, and we respectfully suggest that it is time now to recognize the officers of our judicial branch. The second key part of AM1332 are changes intended to address an ongoing actuarial deficit in the judges retirement fund, and I want to acknowledge and appreciate Senator Stuhr's work with this, as Chair of the Retirement Committee, and her staff. The amendment incorporates provisions derived from LB 643, which I introduced in order to address this problem. These provisions both reform and harmonize our many provisions relating to court fees, and provide a revenue source to ensure solvency of the judges retirement fund. As one can see from the amendment, our statutory provisions regarding court fees are spread across a variety of sections, and have not heretofore been organized pursuant to an overall plan. The result of this is that the total amount of court costs in most matters ends in 50 cents. We ask why. This has resulted in some administrative issues for the court system, including the need to constantly make change and provide refunds of 50 cents to those who pay more. This issue, together with the notion that it was an appropriate time to consider modest increases in most fees, provoked the Office of Court Administrator to develop a plan for reforming, harmonizing, and increasing the fee structure. It was also determined that the revenue derived from such fees would increase an appropriate...pardon me, would provide an appropriate source of revenue to fund the ongoing actuarial deficits in the retirement fund. We must stress that, as Senator Stuhr has told us and would tell us, these deficits must be made up by the state. It is in anticipation of LB 348 and AM1332 that our budget this year did not provide the revenue for adjusting or paying these existing deficits. So this bill is a necessary part of our ongoing budgetary process. There is also an anticipated ongoing deficit in the judges retirement fund, so the source of funds provided in this amendment will be utilized on an ongoing basis, just to provide the level of benefits to which the state has already agreed that it will provide our judges. My understanding is that the Retirement Systems Committee has determined that, based on current collection trends and the adoption of AM1332, the system will come into balance within a three-year period. Therefore, the bill will