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SENATOR BOURNE: Oh, that's a good question. I don't recall us ever looking at their salary increase relative to their retirement, or vice versa. What we simply did was we, in the committee amendment, we put in the percent increase for the judges that the state employees got, and we didn't look at what, you know...that percent increase versus what their retirement benefits are.

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: Okay, thank you, Senator Bourne. You know, just so members are understanding, and Senator Stuhr talked earlier but didn't allude to much of this, our state judges--district court judges, county court judges, Supreme Court judges--are on a...what we call a defined benefit plan, relative to retirement benefits. And if you're a district court judge in the state of Nebraska, you're currently earning approximately \$110,000 a year; a county court judge is 3 percent behind that salary scale, and upon retirement, with full vestiture--in other words, if you're fully vested--you have a retirement benefit that is in excess of \$70,000 a year. And when Senator Brashear speaks of the criteria of our judges or where they're at relative to studies in other courts, or in other states, I doubt if--and I don't know, and perhaps he can speak to this--is whether or not judges' compensation in them studies evaluate or incorporate the retirement component. And while it is true the judges did not receive a salary increase last budget cycle, two years ago, they did, however, indeed, receive an enhancement to their retirement package. They received a...quite a lucrative arrangement relative to the retirement, in terms of a survivor benefit, which harkens back...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR SYNOWIECKI: ...now we're raising court fees on individuals that are coming to court, to help offset, if you will, the addition that we did to the retirement benefit just two years ago. I'm not necessarily against this. I'm...obviously, everyone wants an effective judiciary. However, I don't think we're at critical mass, where we're not attracting accomplished attorneys' application to become judges. I know the district court bench in Douglas County had a vacancy