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discussion of AM0998. Senator Don Pederson.

SENATOR D. PEDERSON: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. I think most people, frankly, don't even know how much we make. I think that we are confused with Congress. And I think a lot of people, frankly...you know, you get correspondence. Somebody, dear Senator, why did you do this bill about something involving international affairs? And they think that we are making a lot of money, and we're not. One of the things that I think was adequately mentioned earlier, the problem that we have is that, as a legislator, we have to put up our salary and say, what do you think? And if any of the, you know, school administrators, county commissioners, anybody, if they had to have public vote on whatever they did in way of salary, it would probably be voted down. And why is this? Partly, there are very few things that the public can vote on. They can be frustrated with Congress doing some silly act, but they have no voice in what a congressman earns or what a senator earns in the United States government. But as far as the state is concerned, it's in our constitution. We're probably the only one that the people have an opportunity to vote on. Why do school bond issues have a problem? And that's because of the frustration that people have. And the only thing that they get to vote on, probably, is the school bond issue. So they generally have a very hard time doing that. They just turn it down. So I think that what we're talking about now is respect for the office, not what we need to make a living. I don't think that's even the issue. And that was mentioned when we talked about constitutional salaries. I think that's the most important thing. I can remember when I first started practicing law, everybody who was a banker or a loan person felt like they had to drive an old car so that people didn't think they were making any money. And that changed. It changed to where the people who are in those responsible positions now drive appropriately good cars. And people look at them with respect. And it's just a perception thing. And I think that we need to say at some point, let's just go ahead and vote on this. Let's go ahead and have respect for the office and determine that we need to go forward with something that...not because of what we need, but because of what is appropriate for the office itself. I think that we as a Legislature owe that responsibility to