

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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FLOOR DEBATE

June 1, 2005

LR 12

time.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Chambers, about 8 minutes.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, as usual, when Senator Schimek has spoken on a bill such as this, I agree with what she said. When this bill was being considered on Select File, I didn't say anything on it because there was nothing really that I felt needed to be said. The job is one that should command a higher salary than currently is paid. There has been a hashing out and a thrashing out of various dollar amounts, various combinations of dollar amounts and hooking a salary increase in the future to the salaries of other elected officials, cost-of-living increases and other things, none of which I think would be successful. The public wants the Legislature to come to them to ask for a salary increase, and since that is the rule according to which these increases occur, they have to be followed. I believe all of us can easily come up with a better, more equitable way to set the salary for members of the Legislature, but being pragmatists is what we must be on occasion. We know that none of those alternatives will fly or set well with the public, so what is before us now is this amendment. If we get 40 votes, it can go onto the primary ballot. If we get 30 then it goes on the general. This does not go to the Governor. When we have a constitutional amendment proposed, we vote on it three times and the third vote concludes the proceedings. It is not something submitted to the Governor, so we are the ones making this decision. For most of us, it will have no impact, but that should not make any difference. We have voted salary increases for constitutional officers, some of whom we've had disputes with, but we were able to look at the nature of the work that those people do, the dignity that ought to attach to the office, and this time we attempted to raise the salaries to a level that is at least commensurate with what the average salary for these offices are in the region of which Nebraska is a part. We could never, as legislators, obtain an amount equal to the average salary for legislators, so we don't take that approach. We have to move incrementally, cautiously, and with great trepidation. When I first came down here and for a good number of the years that I was here, the salary was \$4,800 a year, less than \$100 a week, \$400 a month before taxes. So I think it was in 1988 they