

I've somewhat of a unique position, having served on the Commission of Industrial Relations, and in that capacity we dealt with, on pretty much a daily basis, with the statutes that created the Commission of Industrial Relations and the right of public employee organizations to bargain with cities and counties and other governmental subdivisions, as well as the State of Nebraska. And one thing that is crystal clear to me is that we, as the Legislature, having created the Commission of Industrial Relations, and the right to bargain, also have the right to restrict the right to bargain. And we do that in our statutes already. And the reason we do that, and we've done it from time to time, one of the latest times we did...we did that, in fact we did that while I was in the body when we made a determination as to who was eligible for the bargaining unit in the State Patrol. And we, I think, included...I think we included sergeants in that bargaining unit. That was a request that was made by the State Patrol to include sergeants, and we made a legislative determination that sergeants should be included in the State Patrol bargaining unit. We also did that with...with police departments and fire departments in L...in Section 48-8163 (b), we set forth the criteria that should be established for creating bargaining units for firefighters and police officers. And the reason we did that was because of the, looking back at the legislative history of that particular section is because we treat, generally, in the law of labor relations in the State of Nebraska, we treat firefighters and police officers differently. Could I have a gavel, Madam President, please.

PRESIDENT MOUL: (Gavel.)

SENATOR ASHFORD: We treat police off...thank you. We treat police officers and firefighters differently. We treat them differently. They have a different function. They cre...the...the reason they have a different function is obvious, they perform a public safety function so that when we think about this issue, and I think the bill should be moved to Select File and we should talk about it, because it is clear, from the legislative history of the Commission of Industrial Relations Act and the Constitution, we're...Nebraska is a curious state in that we have a Constitution, Article XV, Section 9, which creates the ability of this Legislature to have a Commission of Industrial Relations and to set forth terms and conditions of how bargaining is to go forth. Senator Chambers is making a case, basically, of public safety, the same sort of