

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Witek. Senator Pirsch.

SENATOR PIRSCH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the body. I...I do want you to, well, however few of you are left, that this policy of bidding by seniority has been going on for 20 years, 20 years, and last March, for the first time in the bargaining agreement, they did allow those provisions that the chief could have that flexibility in assigning officers as needed. The four years, he can assign up to four officers, each of whom have at least four years on the job, to each sergeants area. That was just about a year ago that flexibility happened. And, as I understand it, this is still up for discussion and that negotiations will start in September for the next two-year contract. Now, here we are jumping in when this is something that has definitely been made more flexible by the bargaining agreement, and indeed will come up in the next bargaining agreement if there is...if there are discussions on more power that the chief of police needs. And, Senator Chambers, I did not question police chiefs across the state because they...they have that authority now. They have not abused that as far as I know. I am saying that this is something that because we have that kind of relationship in our police department, that we should allow that to work. Should the Legislature interfere, particularly when we are...when they are at the end of this contract and beginning to negotiate in September, and we jump in, in May? I think it is a very dangerous precedent for the Legislature to set.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Pirsch. Senator Ashford.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. I think, just for the record now, I just want to make a couple of comments. First of all, if you do have an opportunity to review this collective bargaining agreement, or any other collective bargaining agreement with public employees, you will find that 95...90 to 95 percent of the terms and conditions in a collective bargaining agreement have to do with basic terms and conditions of employment, such as grievance procedures, and holidays, and pay, and insurance. What has happened in the City of Omaha is that there has been a 20-year period of time when, for whatever reason, back 20 years ago there was a bidding procedure, based on seniority, for particular shifts and other kinds of distribution of officers in the City of Omaha. There now has been a change in that, as Senator Pirsch suggests. That's all fine, that's all great. The problem is that, as I