



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Salisbury, Distinguished Colleagues of the State and Local Government Committee:

I am still Will Tuell. I still represent House District 10, which consists of nearly two dozen small communities in central and coastal Washington County, and I am here today to enthusiastically present LD 775, "An Act Requiring Voter Approval of Legislative and Gubernatorial Pay Increases."

This bill does exactly what the title says. Under it, any pay raises outside of a COLA that we approve for future lawmakers and governors would be put out to the public for their consideration.

I say this with nothing but appreciation and respect for the hard decision the 131st Legislature made in approving significant pay raises for lawmakers and the chief executive.

In my nine years of serving, I know all too well the challenges many of you grappled with in passing those raises.

On one hand, lawmakers do put in crazy hours working with constituents, drafting bills, trying to educate themselves on issues, and serving their constituents. The same is true of the Chief Executive.

On the other hand, constituents are struggling with inflation, housing, caring for their loved ones, groceries, their property taxes, running their small businesses, and getting the healthcare they need.

Whether you voted for last year's pay raise or not, whether you would have (or not) if you weren't here, the pros and cons are real, and they are not black and white.

That is exactly why we should be putting those raises out to the voters instead of passing them without voters consent.

I am not one who believes "we're voting ourselves a pay raise" because I know that raise only goes into effect with the next legislature or the next governor, but that really isn't the point.

The public, the people we represent, should have the final say on what we, and those who come after us, those who come after the next chief executive, are paid.

If we believe it's important that pay should be raised, we should not have an problem whatsoever putting it out to the people who have entrusted us with these seats.

"But," you may be thinking, "the public doesn't know how much work this job is."

I agree. But I also believe we are capable of giving our constituents, the general public, the information to make an informed decision should they be asked to do so.

I also have faith that they will make the choice that is best for themselves, their families, and their communities. They may agree that the raise is warranted and support it. They may not. Either way, we need to put our faith and trust in them because they have put theirs in us to represent their interests.

I also believe that if we handled future pay raises for lawmakers and the governor in this way that more modest proposals would emerge as a result. Lawmakers would not be putting in bills for double digit pay increases for fear the public would reject them, and the onus would be on us to explain to the public why such a raise is warranted.

Beyond all that, we would not be "voting ourselves" a raise in the eyes of the public. They would be voting us a raise, and I think we would, or certainly should, have more appreciation for it if the voters consented.

Thank you, and I would be happy to take any questions.