

January 9, 1987

15 minutes to explain the bill and 5 minutes to close on it. I would urge the adoption of this amendment. Thank you, Mr. President.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you, Senator Higgins. Senator Withem, speaking to the Higgins amendment to the amendment. Senator Morehead on deck.

SENATOR WITHEM: Mr. President, members of the body, I am not going to vote for the Higgins amendment. I think Senator Higgins did make some excellent arguments as she was giving her presentation. I guess I just don't know if limiting public hearings to one hour, regardless of the merits of the particular piece of legislation, is the right approach to deal with those particular problems that she was addressing. The main reason, though, that I am going to vote against this amendment is that I think the Rules Committee has, on balance, a very good proposal, a proposal that will maintain a balance. What we are dealing with here is dealing with two concepts, two very good things we'd like to accomplish. One is we want to hear from the public, and it is very important that we in the Legislature hear from the public. All of the arguments I've heard about the Unicameral Legislature demanding it are excellent ones. We must maintain public input. At the same token, we need to be more efficient in processing legislation, in gleaning those good ideas out of the bills that are presented to us each session without dealing too much with those ideas that are not going to become legislation. This particular proposal that has come to you today has a little bit of a history. I don't remember if Senator Morehead went over much of the history of it when she was giving her introductions. But if you recall at the beginning of last session, those of you that were here, we had a number of debates on bill limitation, again the goal being hearing from as many diverse ideas as we can, but let's be a little more efficient. Out of that discussion Senator Vard Johnson came up with a proposal, and a pretty harsh proposal I thought, to limit public hearings. It was a proposal I could not support because it gave too much power to the chairs of the committees, it made very little provision for making sure that good bills and bills that senators really wanted heard would actually be heard. Rules Committee has done a lot of work, I think, where they now have a balance where we will be more efficient, but we are not going to be stomping out lots of bills from being heard. I guess I just ask you to relate to yourself, what would you do if you had a bill that you thought greatly of that might not have a public hearing. The first thing you do is