

individuals being elected at the local level. So the concept of an independent election commissioner was created. That position was appointed by the Governor so that elections could be run at the local level independent from the local officials. Over the years that I have been in the Legislature I've been aware...back when Steve Wiitala was the election commissioner I know there were a number of points that were going on at that time where there were disputes between the local county board and the election office about how elections should be properly carried out. Steve Wiitala, because he was not answerable to the local county board was able to make decisions protecting the integrity of the election process, not that anybody was trying to do anything improper necessarily at that time, I'm not implying that, but the independence of the election commissioner from the local elected officials was very important in 1914, it was very important at that time, it continues to be very important. Let me tell you also the genesis, in my opinion, the only place where there seems to be a problem, I haven't heard anybody in Douglas County come forward and want to have the election officials appointed by the county board. I'm not aware of any resolution by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners wanting that to happen. Senator Schimek or Senator Wesely or somebody might tell me if I'm wrong, but I'm not aware of any issues in Lancaster County. This is a Sarpy County issue and right now the Sarpy County Election Commissioner, a woman by the name of Bridget Sheehan who, in my opinion, is going to do a nice job, isn't getting along with the county board. That happens from time to time, but it certainly isn't a reason to bring forward a radical proposal such as this that changes the concept of the independent election commissioner that has been in place in our state for 80 years with an amendment that has not been printed in the Journal, with a concept that's not had a public hearing. There may need to be some things done. I don't know what they would be. I'm comfortable with the current process and I think most people should be also and I would urge you not to support the Pirsch amendment and to get on with the adoption of the committee amendments.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Withem. The Chair recognizes Senator Lynch. Do you wish to speak to the amendment to the committee amendments?

SENATOR LYNCH: Yes. Could I ask Senator Pirsch a question, please.