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March 14, 2002 LB 1018

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of the body. I brought this bill before you today, LB 1018, and like most of the bills you've been hearing this morning, it's a very straightforward, simple bill that does provide some correction in what I consider a problem in the...at the county level. This bill was heard before the Government, Military Affairs (sic) Committee on February 13th and it was advanced out of committee on a 6-0 vote with 1 absent, 1 not voting. Basically, what the bill does, if the county, if any county...as probably many of you know, the county board of commissioners are the budget-making authority at the county level and, interesting enough, because many county boards, because they're only in the courthouse one day a week or one day every other week, in some cases only one day a month, they don't have the material before them or perhaps the expertise in order to do the budgets, and so for years and years they've turned to the county clerk and asked them to prepare the budget for the county. As time went by and because budgets became more and more complex, some of the county clerks decided, because it wasn't a part of their job description, that they shouldn't be, in fact, having to do that and take the extra time. And, by the way, if you've ever done any of these budgets for counties you would know that it takes a tremendous amount of time. I happen to know, because the year that our county clerk retired from the office and the new clerk came in, said that she didn't want to do the budget because it wasn't a part of her job description, I took it upon myself to do the budget. I learned a great deal through that experience because you have to go to the county clerk's office in order to get the material to fill out the necessary forms and it takes...it takes a great deal of work and a great deal of time. And the county clerks, because of their amount of duties they're required to do, didn't feel it was their obligation and, as I said before, under their job description is not their obligation to do the budget. So what's happened in many counties, they started to offer the county clerks some extra funds for doing the budget for the county board. That's interesting because they could hire the county treasurer, the county assessor, or one of the county commissioners or anybody else to do that for them, but under the original statute they could not pay the county clerk, which always seemed rather strange to me. And, yet, as I indicated, some of the county clerks, because they