

February 3, 1981

LB 81

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Wesely, did you wish to speak to the bill?

SENATOR WESELY: Yes, Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I stand in support of the amendment. The amendment was adopted at my request. It was my motion and the point of the amendment is pretty clear I think. We are extending the life of these conservation districts and there is some controversy about that. Senator Maresh isn't here but he has attempted to discontinue those district for some time. The concern he had and which other people had was the problem that you have two taxing authorities essentially doing the same thing in certain areas of the state where these conservation districts exist and the feeling was that we had attempted years ago when we adopted the NRD concept to merge all water resource subdivisions of government into one body so that they could in a coordinated effort deal with water resource problems in this state. However, we did leave the one exception, that being the conservation districts to continue in existence to this coming year, actually this summer they would discontinue, but we are attempting to extend their life and I think that isn't a slap on the wrist. In fact we are giving them a pat on the back encouraging them because they have done a good job but I think that the problem that Senator Maresh was concerned about and other individuals were concerned about, about the taxing authorities what this amendment deals with. The taxing authority now is about one mill. From the testimony we had at the hearing, they are using approximately seventeen percent of the taxing authority, maybe twenty percent, but in any event, they are not using their full taxing authority and that is a good indication, I think, of the work they are doing because they are doing a good job and they are not spending all of their money that they could. Great! Terrific! So let's recognize the fact that they are able to function and do their job and to carry out their responsibilities at a lower mill levy authority than they now have and so this amendment decreases their authority down from 3.5 cents to 1 cent and the whole focus of that is to say that they have been able to function at that level or less in the past, we are extending their life but we shouldn't let them grow in strength, grow in taxing authority, that we should keep them at the level that they are at now to carry out the functions they are doing so well at this point. But I don't want to allow them the chance, and this is my concern, I couldn't support the bill in extending their life if I thought they had the funding authority to expand their operation. I think that we allow them to continue the good work that they are doing now but we shouldn't allow them to expand an operation which this mill levy authority would provide them that opportunity to do, not that they would do it, but that they would have the option