

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Smith. (Cavel.)

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I offer this amendment to LB 182. I believe that some of the things that Senator Wesely said I believe in very much. I support his concerns. I think that part of the problem is, in fact, that we have departments, we have the judicial system who are supposedly acting in the best interests of these people. But you have conflicts, you have all the problems that erupt, you also have a lack of staff, and I really believe that is true, in the Department of Social Services, which makes it very difficult for them to deal with the issue. My amendment, on page 3, line 17, would strike, beginning with the word "three" through the period in line 25, and insert these words, "a six-member panel appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Legislature. The membership shall include a judge, a county attorney, psychiatrist, social worker, clinical psychologist and a citizen at large. The board shall elect a chairman from its membership annually." On page 4 you would strike all of line 1 through line 10, and on page 5, line 4, strike beginning with the second "the" through the period and insert "chairman of the juvenile review panel appointed in Section 2". It strikes references to the panel sitting judicially, and it has a request to convene the panel be filed with the clerk of the court, who then notifies the chairman of the panel. Those are the changes. The main part is the membership of the panel itself. I would ask the body to support this. I'd like to have some discussion on it to see if there is enough interest in this amendment or not. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. To the Smith amendment, Senator Dierks, would you care to speak to the amendment? Senator Haberman, to the amendment. Senator Abboud, would you care to speak to the amendment? Senator Wesely, followed by Senator Bernard-Stevens on the amendment.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. I would rise in support of the amendment and caution you, though, that it does not solve my concerns completely. It at least recognizes the inequity and unfairness of the system set up under this bill. See, the problem is that the whole bill is clearly slanted toward giving judges and the court system the final say on what happens to these children. It isn't attempting to be fair to provide that independent review that has been called for