

shut off. So finally I asked him what his name was and he told me. So then he said, well, that I didn't shut that off. And I said, well, yes, I did, I cleaned it up a lot. Well, Senator, you didn't get my \$10,600 back that I lost with them. Well, one way or another, he was standing out there asking people for signatures, didn't have any idea. I finally demanded the literature that he was supplied. Simply was not true. We had it, the very same thing on the VFW. This is simply a still democratic government. You can still pay them, but let's bring a little bit of responsibility back to it, and the public on... I differ with Senator Schmit. He said the public won't stand this. The public is crying for some accountability in paying these petitioners and, at least, for the petitioners to know what they are asking people to do, and if we don't do it, someone else will find a way to do it. We found all of this last fall. People are sick and tired of that, and I support this bill 100 percent.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Nelson. I will now recognize Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Madam President, members of the body. Just a couple of comments and then I am going to ask Senator Withem a question, if he would so yield at a later time, then he can take whatever time he needs of the rest of my time to answer and to use that time to his best advantage. One of the concerns that I have on the petition process as we have is I think we are beginning to see nationwide, and even within the region, where we have, basically, companies starting to see a very lucrative type of operation where you can begin forming this company, you can make money, and your goal is, basically, to sell your company as someone who can get petitions signed. And I think if we are beginning to get into this area that these types of things should be regulated. We need to put some... some types of regulations, and at the same time, we need to ensure Nebraskans that their basic right of petitioning is not to be infringed upon. And if they want to get, you know, 1,000 people out there and they are doing it all volunteer, and they want to petition their government, that they have the absolute right and freedom to do so. And this bill does that. It allows and maintains that right of absolute freedom of getting petitioners out on an unpaid... in an unpaid manner. But we need some regulation on the other. The question I have for Senator Withem is more of a philosophical, I think, question in another direction. One of the concerns I have in the petition process,