

February 1, 1991 LB 17

a little different on this and I would like to have your attention a little bit so you will hear what I am proposing we do with this bill.

SPEAKER BAACK: Excuse me, Senator Withem. (Gavel.)

SENATOR WITHEM: Thank you. This bill was one I introduced because, frankly, I'm concerned about what the potential might be in our state if we allow unfettered use of the paid circulator process to circulate petitions. The model we have to compare ourselves to is California where in California the norm is that you ignore the Legislature, you go out and if you have enough money, you hire petition circulators and you fight petition...you fight an issue, not by arguing against it but you get your own petition circulators out and get a counterproposal on the ballot so you confuse the voters by having counterproposals on the ballot and then you have to determine if both of them pass, which one goes into effect. And it's a bunch of silliness that goes on in lots of states where this has happened unfettered. My purpose in introducing the bill was to bring some degree of regulation to an industry that we had totally deregulated a couple of years ago. Whether or not this is the best way of doing it, frankly, I'm beginning to have some questions, some questions in my own mind from some of the discussion we've had from some of the things that have been brought up on the bill. Whether simply placing a minimum wage requirement on those people is the best idea, I don't know. There are probably other ideas out there. Senator Bernard-Stevens, the other day, raised an issue of maybe requiring some training of the petition circulators. Might be a good idea, something I hadn't thought of. I know Senator Wesely, I guess I can say this on the floor, he's not here to hear it, may have a good idea, for once. He has an idea of providing disclosure of individuals that are carrying petitions and that they are, in fact, paid circulators. Maybe what we ought to be doing is rather than differentiating between those individuals who organize together to spend money to hire circulators and those that engage in the business, a political consulting type of business. Maybe that's something we ought to do. Maybe we ought to look at the...more disclosure and I have a bill in that will do that, dealing with more frequent disclosure of those raising money to impact upon the process via petition circulation. Maybe we ought to regulate it as we do...what we're attempting to by limiting total amounts of contributions per individual, limiting it as if it were campaign