

Senator Wesely followed by Senator Schimek and Smith. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President, members of the Legislature, I would rise in support of the amendment. I appreciate the work that Senator Conway and the Government Committee have put into this issue. I know Senator Schimek and Senator Withem have introduced legislation and Senator Conway through the Government Committee has been working with the various parties to try and arrive at this proposal. I'm certain that there may be further modification to it as we go forward, but I think clearly the time for action has come. Timing is everything in the legislative process and after the experience of last year's election it would seem wholly appropriate and timely to move forward on this legislation, having had the experience that we did. Let me reiterate just briefly. I was very much involved in the Hopner campaign for Governor back in the spring primary and that was a race with a matter of 40 some votes making the difference between a nominee and not being a nominee and we went through a long six week recount in which I was able to observe the system that we have in place and from those observations I would share with you my particular concerns that we do not have a uniformity of election procedures from county to county and we do not have a clarity of interpreting our statutes from county to county. We need something in place that is a stronger centralized voice to answer questions, to clarify matters, to have us from county to county deal with our elections in the same fashion. Now this may not be a problem if you're talking about a county race or a city race, but when you're talking about a gubernatorial race or you're talking about a legislative race that may cut across various counties, in that case you obviously must have some uniformity and I think one of the concerns I've had is that our system seems to place too much authority at the county level and not enough at the state level in order for us to achieve that goal of uniformity and I think we've seen the price we paid for that in some of the difficulties we had last year. So from my reading of this amendment it seems to me that greater authority is given to the state and that authority is clarified as to being able to render opinions, clarify matters, deal with the various issues we've seen come up over the course of the last year in particular, but previous to that as well. And so it seems to me that some of the concerns I've seen will be rectified. I also want to note, obviously we've all gone through the fight just last month with the question of seating Senator Byars or Paul Korslund. We saw