

with county hospitals and medical facilities, this is, I believe, to be a germane subject, and it happens to come at a very good time because we are going to be faced with a wide variety of solutions by the Revenue Committee, and by the body. And I think you are going to find that we are going to reduce the property valuation for county operations. No matter what scenario we follow, that is going to occur. Levies are going to have to rise and, thus, I believe this amendment, it isn't an answer, it isn't going to cure the solution, but it is going to be able to give those counties some breathing room on their levy limitations. The levy limitation is still in effect. This does not change that perspective. We have had that in place now since the early 1920s at a constitutional convention. This does not change the constitutional requirement of levy limitation, but that constitutional provision never defined what was included in the levy limit, and by statute, we have wanted to help out county medical facilities, and so we say, okay, you can have additional levies. You know, you can come in and add on to that. At this point in time, the counties are faced with a crisis. I believe there is over 40 of the 93 counties, right now, about half are approaching the 50-cent levy limit. But with the proposals we have in front of the Legislature, you can probably bet on about 15 of our counties are going to exceed that levy limit. Anyone who has a county hospital or a county medical facility, you ought to pay close attention because this is going to directly impact upon your county, and your situation. With that, I don't know if Senator Hall is here or anyone from the Revenue Committee, but that did advance out of the Revenue Committee without any negative votes, and with that, I would ask for the adoption of this amendment. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Kristensen. I will now recognize Senator Withem, followed by Senator Lamb. Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Senator Kristensen, I just have a question here, not so much because I have a concern about county operated hospitals, I don't have any, but more concern about the precedent we may be setting here. And I am curious if you can comment on what authority the Legislature has by statutory definition defining expenditures that fit within a county budget as not being included under the levy limitation. Is this, in a multiple choice question here, is this clearly constitutional? Are we bumping up against constitutional into a gray area? Is this likely to be declared unconstitutional? Where are we on