

authority to go to, and that has the power, through rule and regulation, to accommodate new changes in technology, new methods of operating elections, and to clarify disputed points of law. You don't need those clarified after the fact by a bill passing the Legislature. You need a centralized authority, and we don't have that today. And I don't want to get into whose fault it is that we don't have it, whether it's the Secretary of State's fault, whether it's the Legislature's fault that we haven't given that authority. I want to get beyond that, but just make the blanket statement, in my judgment we don't have that. The Secretary of State appeared before the Government Committee, made the point that he doesn't feel, under current statutes, he has the ability to clarify election law and to give direction to those local election officials, because those local election officials go to their local county attorneys for advice. So they are now caught in a Catch 22. A number of these local election officials, who are now concerned because 579 is passing, are the same ones who raised questions about an inability to get their questions responded to, an inability to get the right sorts of direction so that they know what direction they are going. What this bill does is, I think for a fairly moderate sum, and I was going through this A bill here with Senator Bernard-Stevens, a second or two ago, Senator Conway is 100 percent right, not passing 579A will not save \$186,000, unless you think we're not going to prepare ballots for this next election. I also questioned some of these one-time start up costs, because I think when some of the functions that are currently done in the Secretary of State's office no longer need to be done there. Some of these one-time functions could be transferred out of that office, too. But even that is a fairly modest sum to set up a body that is going to be able to make sure that the elections, which are the very life blood of this system, under which we operate, to make sure that these elections are operated in an efficient fashion, so those people charged with the responsibilities of carrying out our election laws know who they can turn to to get proper answers to their questions, and get proper directions, so that we will have elections operating without the type of problems that we had. It's not just the democratic recount for Governor, it's not just the 30th Legislative District...

SPEAKER BAACK: One minute.

SENATOR WITHEM: ...race. If you go have a quiet, behind the scenes, off-the-record discussion with election officials in