

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issue was raised with regard to whether or not counties could afford this. I would argue, ladies and gentlemen, you can't afford not to do this. You just don't understand that this is going to improve the quality, I believe. I know Senator Wickersham argues that that does not happen, but if we didn't have standards, if you will, why would we have a test to begin with? Why would the department require that individuals who get elected or prior to election have to pass a test. The fact of the matter is the test really isn't all that tough. One of the things we heard from the assessors through the commission was that the test was really kind of not much of anything and to prove it we sent Tim Erickson, research analyst for the committee, out to take the test. It's an eight-hour test. He took it in four and his certificate is hanging on the wall downstairs in his office that he can be a certified assessor should he run and win, whether he chooses to do that or not. It is...he has absolutely no real estate background. He doesn't happen to be an attorney so he just walked in, took the test and took it in half the time allocated and passed. It's not that difficult. But that's not the point. The point here is, is that it will be the best money spent if it's necessary to spend money to fill these positions. The assessment of the property, the land, the buildings, whatever, throughout the counties is the most important job, I believe, to solving the property tax problem that we have, at least it begins there. If you don't begin with the right numbers, if you don't begin with the right values, if you don't have uniformity there amongst the counties, you start off on the curve. You're already in trouble and all you do when you get through the rest of the steps is you continue to throw the whole system out of line that much farther. You need to do this. I'll bring in the bill next year to do it. I will, and I'll give Senator Will the balance of his time.

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Will.

SENATOR WILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, in closing, Senator Hall has eloquently stated some of the problems that we are facing in the area of assessment and I think, if nothing else, a measure like the amendment that I'm proposing will...certainly, as Senator Wickersham points out, this isn't going to guarantee that we have absolutely perfect assessment techniques going on out there. I do think that it would guarantee a certain degree of professionalism, a certain degree