

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really think that in this Legislature on this issue we need to listen to the people in our districts and I know as I've talked to people in my district and God knows there are a lot of professionals, probably more in my district than any other district in the state, but I'll tell you what. The people are telling me that we need to expand the tax base. We need to take the pressure off the property taxpayer, the middle income taxpayer that is paying the property tax and is paying the sales tax on the items that they buy and they purchase. The only way we're going to do that, the only way we're going to do that is to have the courage to break the barrier on the sales tax on service issue and I, as a practicing attorney, that's all I do, I rely on my income and fees from clients. I have no problem paying sales tax on those fees and nor do a lot of my colleagues, but someone is going to have to, and I appreciate Senator Hall being the one today at this time who has made the effort again to break that barrier. I really think if we'd not listen to the lobbyists, but listen to the people who have been talking to us, I think over, at least to me, over and over again, you must, you must expand the tax base. You must make taxes more even, more fair and you must take the load off of us, the middle income taxpayer. The only way we are going to realistically do that is to expand the tax base, and as Senator Landis very rightly said, anything else we do is just throwing cotton at the...

SPEAKER BAACK: (Gavel.)

SENATOR ASHFORD: Anything else we do in this regard is simply throwing cotton at the problem. It's not going to make any difference whatsoever. And certainly, and I've gotten notes from both the Bar Association lobbyists and the trial association lobbyists, we violently oppose this, we violently oppose this. Well, I'll tell you what. They may violently oppose it, but the people on Main Street are saying, take the tax burden off of me and the only way we're going to do that, the only way we're going to do that is have the courage to break some of these barriers. And I appreciate Senator Hall for bringing this amendment at this time, whether it stays on only for a year. I have some problems with the specificity and maybe we can talk about that, but I think in theory he's right on the mark. We need to do this and I, as an attorney, I'll take whatever flak I get from my fellow lawyers, but I'll tell you what. This has to be done in our state, we have to break the