

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Schimek. Senator Hillman, you're next.

SENATOR HILLMAN: Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I, too, just... Senator Rasmussen, I think, made a very good explanation but since we are both involved in the project, I think it's important I also address the issue of the study and in contacting people to serve on a task force. Where we were is we contacted every legislative representative from all three counties, any state senator in those three counties, and asked them if they could give us names of people that worked in an area of working with teens and in the area of teen pregnancies that would have some input as far as problem identification goes and then programs that were going on that could help in that area. We had some very good response from all senators that were contacted and they did that very timely and we appreciated it very much. Where we were is the only staff that worked on the interim study was our own staff, two in my office, really one, and then also in Senator Rasmussen's and in the information gathering, by the time we got it together in what we figured was the draft form that we could take it out to the... in the task force and take it across the state, the interim had pretty well expired and we were running into the holiday season and felt we didn't have time. At that time, we did contact each of the senators and explained the situation and said we would continue. It's been a very difficult project and that's one of the reasons, main reasons that I do introduce the amendment that I have right now is because Senator Rasmussen and myself have found us needing further assistance. The longer we work with it, the greater the problem becomes, and the problem is not just teen pregnancies. There is a lot of things that are affecting adolescence and teen pregnancies is one of the symptoms. It's one of the things that happened because of it. I would also like to say, Senator Labeledz, that I appreciate the fact that you would use the word "choice". I think choice is a very important word in all of our vocabularies and another word for choice is alternative. And I think that's another thing that we need to look at are alternatives, because abortion is not the only choice that people have. It is not necessarily the best choice that anyone has. It is a choice. I also like to think of, like I said, alternatives, because there are alternatives to an unwanted pregnancy other than abortion. And what I would hope this amendment would do, would not only look at prevention, perhaps in looking at maybe some alternatives. Last year when