

to elect its senator now, as Senator Peterson says he does, this amendment allows that to take place, but it just has a cleaner map in terms of following county lines. Again, the amendment simply changes the positioning of numbers 18 and 19 so that District 19 will be Madison County, District 18 would be half of Knox, Cedar, Dixon, a portion of Wayne and Stanton Counties.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Withem. Before I proceed to the next speaker, I would like to introduce some guests of the Legislature. They are guests of Senator Beyer. We have 14 Girl Scouts and their helpers from Troop 689 from Westmont Elementary in Springfield, Nebraska, and their leader. Thank you for being with us. The next speaker, Senator Wesely, did you wish to address the amendment?

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, members, very briefly, I rise in support of the Withem amendment. I believe he has struck upon the reason that we need to make the change and that is to get off of the question of who is in and who is out and on to the question of how the districts ought to be realigned, focusing on that primary issue. We can still address the question of whether Madison County gets their vote this year or not, but in my view, the Withem amendment does get us back on track and what we should be discussing. And on that point, I want to discuss, I hope Senator Conway and others will have a chance to talk after hopefully the Withem amendment is adopted about the actual lines that are being proposed because I think it does put into place the very question that has been spoken about on the floor a number of times. Do we try and get districts that have a community of interest, of some similarity in the different types of interests that they have, versus following those strict and rigid county lines that we are all used to in this state? Gets back to Senator Beutler and his proposal for a change in the Constitution, which has put us in a straitjacket in some ways, at least in terms of Madison County, on how we redistrict in following of county lines because county lines don't always represent community of interest. And from what I understand, the lines that were drawn by the Government Committee did not follow county lines as much as this plan but maybe followed community of interest better and yet we do have the court hanging over us. And so at this point, perhaps, we need to follow the county lines even if they aren't a community of interest as good as another alternative map. But to head off any lawsuits and any problems with the court, I think probably it does make sense to take that step and I would like to have