

January 18, 1995

definitely every two-year session with an open and honest vote for our leadership. Thank you very much. I hope you will vote for this amendment.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Witek. The Chair recognizes Senator Wesely, followed by Senator Chambers and Schimek.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Mr Speaker, members, although I appreciate Senator Witek's sincerity on this, I must rise in opposition to this motion. There's a number of reasons why we go to secret ballot in electing our leadership. One of those we need to recognize, and I don't think it was mentioned by Senator Witek, but we are the only nonpartisan Legislature in the country, so we don't have the party line drawn down here in this Legislature. And we try to, I think, adhere to that concept of nonpartisanship as much as possible. I think that if you go to an open ballot, we will destroy some of that effort to be nonpartisan. I think that is a change that would be detrimental to the body. But, in addition, we don't have the sort of things that other bodies have in terms of party organization, the seniority system, how we organize; it's not as clear-cut. We have a much more wide-open process here as a nonpartisan Legislature. Seniority doesn't play a whole big role, party doesn't play a role. And all of that seems to me to indicate that we need to have the ability to work together in whatever fashion we can and a secret ballot facilitates people, I think, joining hands and working together that might not otherwise be able to do so. And I want to note, even with the advantages and needs of a nonpartisan body to have a secret ballot, these other Legislatures around the country and the Congress elect their leadership by secret ballot, as I understand it. There may be exceptions to that, but my understanding is that basically, on leadership issues, you have the process as almost always a secret ballot, just as when we elect individuals to office, we have a secret ballot. There's sort of an understanding, I think, that when you're voting for individuals, whether it be as an individual voter or as a voter here in the Legislature, that that's something that we have some right to secrecy on to again facilitate making the best choices possible. So I think that there's precedent within this Legislature, within other Legislatures and within the whole voting process to have...allow for a secret ballot. And I think that that's a precedent we don't want to change. Now I want to also note that some of you have received the letter from the Jaksha group. There was a couple of mailings, one before the elections and one after, in