

ratified by the people, then we stay with the system we have now, based on registered votes. The current requirement sets relatively high signature thresholds that have been a cause of great concern to many Nebraskans. With this in mind I would urge you to consider the consideration of the committee amendments. I'd urge the movement of the committee amendments.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Robinson. For discussion on the committee amendments we have Senators Bernard-Stevens, Dierks, Schimek, Warner and Witek. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. Obviously, this particular committee amendment and the bill itself is going...is going to create lots of debate, and I look forward to the debate because I think it's going to be very enlightening and very interesting as we talk about the petition process as it affects Nebraskans and state government. However, one of the points that I would like to make is that the committee tried very hard not to...to be as unbiased as possible, to try to come up with an amendment that seemed to say to all sides that we don't need to have a war on this, there is a way to work this out in a semblance of a compromise, if one wishes. My sense is that at least on the committee there were six votes to advance it, probably six different reasons for advancing the committee amendments that we have. But in essence, the committee said that we would like to compromise. And the committee amendments in essence say two things, it says, one, we're going to try the bifurcated system, we believe that's a better system with the paid petitioners and volunteer petitioners, but we also understand the argument that there may be some constitutionality questions in there. I, personally, don't believe so, but nonetheless, my opinion doesn't mean much when it comes up to the court. In fact, my opinion is probably as valid as the Attorney General's opinion when it comes to the court, but that's neither here nor there. What we then said in the committee amendments, quite honestly, is, look, if the bifurcated system is unconstitutional, then we go back basically to the way it was, which is what Senator Dierks tried to do in his original bill. That's the basic concept of the committee amendments. My sense is, look, there's going to be a lot of questions as to thresholds, the thresholds probably are too low, the committee didn't really worry about thresholds because we knew this body would set those thresholds when it came to the floor. We put before the committee...the Legislature a compromise that says a bifurcated system we would like to try,