

SENATOR WITEK: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, this is the last time I will be speaking on this resolution, and I know people will probably be happy to hear that, but I just want to say that there is a lot of questions that you leave unanswered with the adoption of this resolution. You don't know why they need to incorporate, the Conference of States. You don't know why they had to have the exact same language, the following identical language in our resolution. You don't know what they are going to discuss, there is no agenda published here, although with the adoption of Senator Bertler's amendments, we will hopefully know before it convenes. But I just wanted to read to you an article, a little article that was in the paper, yesterday's paper, and it was: White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta criticized Republican plans to set federal limits on lawsuit damages, saying Sunday it would usurp the authority that belongs to the states. In one of the first White House comments on tort reform, which will be debated on the House floor this week, Panetta said President Clinton "for a long time has felt that the states ought to have jurisdiction over these issues." Panetta, speaking on ABC's "This Week With David Brinkley," said Republicans contradicted their dedication to states' rights in seeking a national uniform set of laws on product liability and limits on the sums awarded to injured people. So everybody is climbing on the states' rights bandwagon to accomplish or to try to stop from being accomplished whatever it is they agree or disagree with, and I guess I would just add a note of caution that for all the bad things that people keep saying the federal government is doing, and I still say it is the people, it is not the Constitution, they do accomplish some good things, and I hope that, in my opinion, this type of tort reform, national tort reform, needs to happen. The people, I think the majority of people want it to happen, but as we all know, there are very powerful forces I am sure in Washington, just like there are here, trying to stop that from happening. And now they are trying to stop it from happening in the name of states' rights. So I am sure this won't be the last issue to fall to that call of states' rights. Thank you.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, this will be probably the last opportunity we will have to speak on this, and I am serious about not wanting to get involved in all of this. This is what I'd...I'd really call white people's