

and to resolve it hopefully before any existing petition drive or any people are disillusioned or put out of business by an adverse interpretation by the courts on the two-tier system. It's no big deal to me. However, I feel much more comfortable doing it this way in terms of meeting my...what I feel are my obligations to my constituents. I think, unless there is some hurry in testing the two-tier system, it seems to me that this is a cleaner way, that this is a clearer way, and a more...in a way that will seem much more severable to the courts in the event that the two-tier system is not approved by the courts, and, altogether, seemed like a happier solution to me. I would be interested in the thoughts of others. Thank you.

**SPEAKER WITHEM:** Thank you, Senator Beutler. Senator Bernard-Stevens, followed by Senators Dierks, Schimek, Hall, Warner, Maurstad, and Vrtiska.

**SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I rise to oppose the Beutler amendment for a myriad of reasons. Number one, I guess, is more of a philosophy. Not only does Senator Beutler change the order around, and he argues it makes it simpler, which I'd argue, no, it probably confuses the issue even more, but he also lowers the numbers back down to a lower percentage, and I am looking specifically at page 1254 on the Journal, it would be on the first page, line 16, and then on the second page, 1 through 6, where we actually change the percentages and make them lower. And I want to argue that first point first, which is a good way to argue a first point first. But, nonetheless, the first point, actually I may argue the first point second, and the second point I will argue first. When we have a low number, right now we have petitions that have been filed I assume, and people are in a process of deciding, you know, gearing up, trying to get their petitions ready to go, and right now the only uncertainty is they don't know how many signatures they need. But everyone is on the same playing field at this point, and we, as a body, have an obligation to set what we think would be the proper amount of signatures. Those people that are out there gearing up, frothing at the mouth, just waiting to change the Constitution to their liking, will have no difficulty with the bill the way it is now because we will set the amount of signatures needed and, in fact, that is what their goals will be. So we are not talking about...the way it is now in the bill is not an unlevel playing field, number one. Number two, I have to look back and argue just a little bit and reflect about the balanced budget amendment in Washington, D.C., that