

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker...excuse me. Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, this amendment puts a time limit on petition drives. You know if we're going to go back to a reduction in the number of signatures that we're going to require, for those who wish to amend the constitution and otherwise enact legislation or repeal legislation, it would seem to me that we ought to consider other factors involved with the circumstances today. And one of those is the time it takes to do a job like that. I was looking at an article about the petition drives being looked at for the 1996 election, and under the current level of signatures required it's something like 92,000 signatures are necessary. NSEA and Farm Bureau, together, have membership of 93,000 members, I understand from that article. So if two groups, out of all the groups and organizations in the state, if just two of them decided that they wanted to see something done, which they're evidentially working on right now, and they got just every one of their members to sign, which of course would be impossible, but if they did, they would have enough just between the two groups to have on the ballot an initiative to amend the Constitution of the State of Nebraska. Now, if you argue that let's say half of those people aren't going to want to sign it, or they don't, for whatever reason don't get around to signing it, but let's say that the half that do sign just get out and just get one person, their spouse, for instance, or friend to sign, again you're back to the point where basically two organizations, just within their membership, could get on a ballot an initiative. Well, it just seems to me that we're making it...and that's under the current level of signatures. Now under this proposal you want to go back to the lower level, which will make it even easier. Well, if we're going to take that step, which I frankly oppose, I think we at least ought to consider, well, how long do we give them to do that? Currently, you can take as much time as you want in setting a target date and go off and initiate a petition to change the constitution. And there are limitations on how long you can do a referendum, obviously there are some limitations on that. But it seems to me that the issue ought to be raised about these lower numbers that we have in here. They were able to, under the petition drive for term limits, with paid circulators, what do they have a month? In a month they got over 100,000 signatures. Well, this proposal says they have no more than six months that they can propose an amendment and