

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. I agree with what Senator Wesely is trying to do and I'll state why here in a minute or two. This amendment...my sense is that six months...in...in...when I just have a gut feeling that six months is just not enough a time. And I think anyone having a petition process, if we're going to have one in Nebraska, which obviously we are by constitution, so if we're going to do so I think we need to get a reasonable amount of time and that's why I put the amendment of one year. I agree with Senator Wesely that to have it totally open-ended is ridiculous. And I go back to again the arguments I made the other day about the forefathers, when they created the Constitution of the United States. They made it very difficult to change the constitution, and I say that again, our forefathers, which all of us try to say we want to be as democratic and follow the principals as we can of the democratic ideals, they wanted it very difficult to change the constitution. Did they want to make it impossible? No, but they wanted to make it so that if there was a change it would be a change that lasted over time, that is that there was a group of people that may have failed the first time, may have failed the second time, they convince a few more, they may fail the third time, it stays as a national issue, they may fail the fourth time, it stays as a national issue, and finally the nation says, you know, it's time to do so. And I go back again to the balanced budget amendment, an amendment to the federal Constitution. That bill, that proposal, that resolution has been in front of the Congress countless times, and it fails, then it fails again, and it fails again. And the reason it fails is because the nation is not yet ready to do this. But each time it fails it has a majority. This time it had 66 votes in the Senate, it needed 67. But even if it would have gotten the 67 votes, whether or not we agree with the policy or not, that still wasn't going to make a change in the constitution because the states, by three-fifths vote, had to ratify. Each state would have had to ratify. And there's a time period of which we have to ratify. And if we don't do it in the time period then it still doesn't become an amendment to the constitution. But then you look at the State of Nebraska, when I first came down to this body, which wasn't that long ago, the attitude of the public and the Legislature was the constitution is a sacred document, we should not change that document unless it is absolutely important. And even if