

change the constitution, then it ought to be important enough for the citizens of the state to address it in a very timely manner, that being a six-month time frame, the one that is not dissimilar to the time frames in which we work. So for those purposes I rise in opposition to Senator Bernard-Stevens' amendment and would urge you to support Senator Wesely's amendment which would put the six-month time frame in place. Thank you, Mr. President.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Bernard-Stevens. Senator Witek.

SENATOR WITEK: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I rise in opposition to both the Bernard-Stevens amendment and the Wesely amendment, and I would ask that members take the time to read page 5 in the constitution that's probably at everybody's desk and talk about this process. I wonder if we could make it any more difficult. First of all, we say that the first power reserved by the people is the initiative. Okay? And it's going to be protected here in the constitution. Then we say, first we had the registered voter change that Senator Hall and Senator Chambers made with the Supreme Court's help there, and said that it has to be only registered voters. So the signatures raised at that point. Then we said...then we made the change on...that registered voters of each of two-fifths of the counties of the state, then they could file it with the Secretary of State's office, and then we said that at that point they had three...if it was filed, they have to go ahead and file it with the Secretary of State, he goes through the signatures, and if he invalidates enough so that the signatures are no longer valid, they have to go ahead and, once it's to a vote of the people, they have to try again if it fails. So it's not like they can keep trying and trying after three years, you have three years. If it fails through a vote of the people they can't do anything for another two years on that same petition subject. So you can't come back every year and try and try again on the same subject within that period of time. Then you're saying you've got a higher threshold of signatures, you've got two-fifths of the voters in the counties of the states, you've got the added burden of cost, it's very costly for people to take the time off work, you're talking about paid circulators. Most of the time they are not paid circulators, they are volunteer circulators, and it's very expensive for them to take the time off work or to spend their weekends away from their families standing at shopping malls, those types of things. It's very difficult to