

would ask you to seriously think about how you want to conceptualize this whole area and whether this particular provision, which is designed obviously to make the getting of the signatures much more difficult, whether this really is fair to the petitioners on the one hand, and two, whether it's fair to the Legislature and our opportunity to review and react on the other hand. And I appreciate what Senator Wesely is trying to do, and in many ways I have sympathies with it, but I think it doesn't take us to the path that we must travel in order to gain an equilibrium and balance in this particular area of law. Thank you.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Beutler. Senator Wesely, followed by Senators Schimek, Witek and Chambers.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature. Let me express what I've already told Senator Beutler privately, that he makes good arguments. And when we talked about putting an amendment up here we had talked about putting a period of time prior to the filing deadline, so we'd go back from the July date six months. And I did not offer that with this amendment because I thought the petition circulators would appreciate the flexibility of picking the time frame in which they wanted the petition. So that's the reason that we did it in this fashion. But I am more than willing to consider Senator Beutler's concerns, and if there's a way to work those out I'd be willing to do so. My...Senator Witek was talking about well why are we trying to do this? And there's a number of reasons. First off, when you allow for a petition drive to just linger on, and she made the point that it's 20 months. I continue to argue that you could start today, a petition drive for 1998 or the year 2000, and if you did so and didn't...turned over your signatures and have them rejected, you would have unlimited time, or it appears you could have unlimited time. So what she's talking about is if you try a petition, you fail, you have to wait until the next election to start again, and then you have the four months prior to the next election to turn it over. Well, that's true in that situation. But you do...you have a 20 month restriction in that regard. But if you wanted to, you could set up a scenario where you had longer than 20 months, in my view it is not clear and we should put some clarity in that. And even then 20 months, the point is you have 20 months, you're out there for 20 months, you don't have a real focus in on this issue. And I think putting six months, and I know Senator Bernard-Stevens is saying a year. Really, I'd like