

taxpayer because once you go to the County Board of Equalization you have to go to the district court to file to seek an appeal. What LB 490 does is it attempts to bring into focus an easier process, and I have a handout that you all have in front of you and I would suggest that you take a look at that handout if you want to see a schematic drawing that's the last couple of documents. You will see our current system of assessment and equalization and the appeals that are brought forward to that and then you'll see the system that we have developed and submit for your review and, hopefully, for your approval. But equalization is extremely important for a variety of reasons. One of those reasons is obviously that state aid is distributed based upon the idea and the notion that property is equalized and fair and that people are paying their fair share based on the values. Now a lot of people are going to say my property tax is higher than it was the year before, and that's really not the indicator. The indicator is, is it fairly done so that you're paying a proportionately same share as anyone else would be with similarly situated property? LB 490 seeks to do a couple of things. One is improve the speed and ease for an individual taxpayer to object and gain relief from their valuation, not only from the way that it is classified but the way that it is valued and the way that it is valued in proportion or compared to other pieces of property. Two, it provides more of a professionalism. It allows for this commission to have the appeal because, in effect, what I am doing is eliminating the district court. I'm allowing for taxpayers to go from their County Board of Equalization, like they always have, and then go to the district court, or go away from the district court, go to the Tax Equalization Review Commission to seek the redress there. If they don't like the result there, they obviously can go to the court of appeals and that provides their access to the court. We are not denying people access to the court system through this system, but we're allowing them a quicker mechanism to achieve their complaints or to achieve some remedy for what they believe to be unfairly valued property, not only in how it is valued, the dollars, but how it is compared to other individual pieces of property. The committee amendment specifically does a couple of things also that I think is important and I'll move into what the committee amendment does at this point in time. The green copy of the bill had a small claims provision. In other words, for smaller property owners they could go directly in and have a small claims system and an approach to object to their valuation. The only problem with doing that is there was no appeal from that.