

is offering.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Chambers. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Madam President and members, let me, first off, there are two inaccuracies with the handout from Senator Witek, as Senator Chambers has already identified. Number one, the committee amendment doesn't deal with the payments, it deals with the standard of need. It disengages from tying payments to standard of need. That was something that was adopted early in the 1980s and we are saying that that does not have to happen and we're going to keep the payment level. The payment level is not changed by this, but the standard of need which is the standard by which you qualify for ADC or what you then are disqualified from ADC, that would reflect the Consumer Price Index. And let...so, first off, we're not talking payments, we're talking about the standard of need which is a qualifying standard. And then the other thing is that this adjustment does not happen annually, it happens every two years. So those are two things that are in the handout from Senator Witek that are not accurate. Also, let me...let me indicate to you that I earlier was unclear about how many times we had increased the standard of need, at least since I've been elected in 1979, and the answer is that we've done it three times. We did it in 1980 when we went from \$310 to \$335, then we went in 1981 up to \$350, so fairly quickly we had a couple of increases. And then we didn't increase it again until 1988 and we haven't...we haven't now for seven years increased it off of that level. So three times in 17 years we've made an adjustment in the standard of need. And, as a result, as a result of the fact that we have not made an adjustment, currently if we had kept pace with the Consumer Price Index, we...which we haven't done, we would have a much higher standard of need. Where we are currently is about 57 percent of where, in 1979, we stood in terms of the determination of what the standard of need should be. So our inaction on this has led us to a deep hole where we're now 43 percent below what we once were as a state in recognizing the need for assistance in our welfare program. We will never make that up. This amendment does not try and make that up, does not bring us up to that level. It just says let's not get the hole any deeper. We're already far below the standard of need that we once thought was appropriate, but let us not get any further behind because the Legislature has not systematically increased that standard of need, and again, not the payments, the standard of need. Now