

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

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Madam President. This has been a little confusing. We are getting hit from different directions in ways that I didn't anticipate, but I would, again, encourage you not to support the Hall amendment, although I acknowledge the intent here, but the trouble I have are two. First off, this is shall be ineligible, which means even if the county wanted to help somebody out, they wouldn't have the choice, and the individual we are talking about, Senator Abboud, I think you were talking about this is somebody who has been dropped off because of his or her own actions. I don't know if you caught that this is also due to termination of benefits. So if the two years is up and they are no longer getting assistance, and some crisis hits them that requires, for instance, in the dead of winter they can't pay their heating bill, the county that might say that is something we should help with now shall not be able to help. It is not just those people that have been kicked off of the program for something that they've done, this is anybody out there who now gets the two years cut off, and whatever needs they have they shall not be met by the counties any longer. And, again, this is a long-term reversal of the historical role of the counties in providing for the poor. It was their first responsibility, I believe, in budgeting and its primary responsibility in overall programs that they have. It is not something that they've enjoyed doing. They tried to pass it on to the state through transferring general assistance to the state. Now if we want to talk about that, that's worth talking about, but this sort of effort, I think, is punitive. It is mean-spirited, and it will end up coming back on us because what will happen is we will cut off people after two years at the state level. They will have no place to turn to except for possibly charity like a church or a Salvation Army or something, and something terrible is going to happen to somebody out there, and they are going to say, that bunch of legislators, they did it, they came up with it, they cut off the county as well as the state, and look what happens. We've got people on the street and this is the suffering that is going on. So if you want to make welfare reform work and you don't want it coming back to hit you in the backside of the head because of problems that result from it, you don't want to adopt this amendment. This is taking away the last chance to deal with whatever situations follow from the cutoff. I, again, ask you please oppose the Hall amendment, if not for the poor, then for your own sake