

SENATOR WITEK: Mr. Speaker, members of the body, Senator Kristensen, not everybody from Douglas County, who has some problems with this bill, has anything to do with the public defender's office in Douglas County. And I know, I have heard from other people that there is a problem with several senators from Douglas County on this bill because of some reason in the public defender's office, but I haven't even talked to the public defender's office, and I still have many of the same questions that Senator Beutler is bringing up on this bill, and more, more to how it will work, and whether this is the direction we need to go. Because when I read through your amendment that you are following with, and actually the bill, itself, it seems to me that we are building another program, another bureaucracy to deal with this problem that, to me, seems to be a money problem. It is not a problem of not being able to get attorneys in these counties. There seems to be a dearth of attorneys everywhere in this entire state, and we are not having problems getting those attorneys to do this work for us. What these counties are having a problem with is the money to pay for these long trials, and if it is a money problem, then we should give it a money solution, and we should put together some type of a fund where...an insurance fund or a disaster fund of sorts, that they are talking about like in the insurance program that I went to, and they are talking about the problem that they had in Florida with the hurricane, and how they can't afford those types of disasters anymore in these areas of the country and they want everybody to pool their money, and when those types of disasters happen, then they will pull from that pool of money. And Senator Beutler is bringing up some very legitimate questions here on how the percentages will be worked out, and to which counties will be able to take the money that they need, and how much they need, as to whether we will just give everybody whatever they need, depending on what happened. I am wondering myself if this won't raise some of the attorneys' fees. I know in some areas of the state, the attorney fees are less than in some of the bigger cities in the state. How do you make that equitable? So there are a lot of questions with this kind of legislation that I don't see any answers to, and, to me, the answers that you are coming up with with your following amendment are, you know, setting up this committee, and putting attorneys in there, and possibly putting some on staff, and all these things, and it is not the attorney problem that I see here. I see it as a money problem, and I would rather see legislation to deal with this more in line with setting up an