

true, why then is the state interfering with the process? That's why we have a constitutional cap. That's why we allow them to go up to a certain point to take into account the variances from year to year. So then the question becomes, is this property tax relief? Well, I think we can all snicker a little bit at that in the final analysis because this is exactly the sort of property tax relief proposition that the Governor dislikes so much because it never really results in any property tax relief. It never really controls spending overall, and puts more state money into what was formerly a county function. So it is not going to work as property tax relief, so why are we...why are we doing this? And the only legitimate answer can be that there are certain small counties up there...out there that are up against the .5 constitutional lid and need help, and we need to get our indigent services straightened out a little bit so there is more uniformity across the state and more balance. Those are the only real two purposes of the bill. So what I am saying with this amendment is let's look at the idea of small versus large counties. Just because they are small, they shouldn't have a call upon state funds to a greater extent than anybody else, in my opinion. If those small counties want to get together and have a kind of insurance policy, which this bill could represent, whereby they could even out their expenses over a number of years by using the state public defender here and there from time to time, that's great, and that's precisely what my amendment does. It says those counties that want to stay in the system and think it can be a good insurance policy, stay in it. More power to you, good idea. It can help balance things out. But for those counties that have historically handled all of these expenses, whose levies are not near the .50 cap, who can handle extraordinary expenses, why should they be drawn into a system that, in truth, is going to funnel funds back to smaller counties, and to 20 or 25 counties that are entirely too small? We are perpetuating...we are perpetuating some inefficiencies out there that we should not be putting up with in this day and age. And this amendment is really a truth amendment, isn't it? If you are against taking those counties out, why are you against it? Because their share of the funds will come out? You are afraid they will opt out? That means they don't think they are going to get their share of services. And if you think that they will opt out, then you are admitting that this bill is for the small counties. Now Richardson County is a peculiar situation.

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.