

to close.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Withem, members of the Legislature, two spoke in opposition to it and really it is difficult to address this again because I am not sure there was anything substantively said against the amendment. Senator Schimek did indicate that she didn't think it had enough public discussion and consideration. It was debated earlier this year at some length on the floor. It has been before the Government Committee on public hearings twice with some people in favor of it, some people against it. The first time I presented it, I think it was a brand new idea with the Government Committee; this time, there were three votes for it. I think there is an emerging recognition that with paid circulators we have no handle on this process, and I think that the probability that the two-tier system will be approved by the courts is 50-50 at best. I am voting for it. I am willing to try it. I think it is a very sensible idea, but if it is stricken, you are going to have a low petition total to deal with, and you are going to have that low petition total to deal with in conjunction with paid circulators. And it will then be possible for very narrow, well-financed, but, philosophically, narrow interest groups to, in rapid-fire succession, put continuing petitions before the people. It is not going to take that much money to do it, and they will be doing it, and they will time it so that the Legislature has no response. Sometimes we will be caught completely off guard on subject matter that we have not even been asked to deal with. Sometimes we will have been asked to deal with it. Other times, we will not have been asked to deal with it. So, again, all this amendment does is says...it changes the time frame, it just moves it up a little bit, and says, let's get these things filed nine months before the election date instead of four months. And I suggest to you that it is going to have two very beneficial effects, in addition to allowing the Legislature to review the matter and present an alternative amendment. First of all, it will start the public debate very early because people will know what the proposition is and they will know it has been approved with the requisite number of signatures. And then if the Legislature enters into the debate, we will have a very early and a very thorough public debate on these, as opposed to quite often, as you and I, and all of us know, oftentimes it is two or three weeks before the election before the debate on these matters really gears up and people really start thinking about it. And by that point in time, then it becomes almost a question of money winning, that