

Senator Wesely's today, Mary Bauerle of Lincoln is under the south balcony. Would you please stand and be welcomed by your Legislature. Thank you. Senator Beutler, on the Wickersham amendment.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Crosby, members of the Legislature, I would like to support the Wickersham amendment. First of all, let me remind you again about our processes and about a deliberative process and about looking at things fairly and fully before we make a decision about them. You're talking, in this amendment, about the entire weatherization program, and you're talking about ending it. There have been accusations about inefficiency and lack of need of the program. But all the discussion you're hearing are the few remarks, perhaps informed, perhaps uninformed, of people on Select File, at one moment in time, about ending a whole program. I suggest to you that's not the way we do things and it's not the way we should do things. And the only justification for doing it in this manner it seems to me is if you have some evidence that there is an overwhelming problem. Now, first of all, let me say that in three years as Chair of the Natural Resources Committee, I haven't had anybody come to me about problems with the Weatherization Fund, no school district has come to me about problems with the Weatherization Fund. There may be problems, but I think that those who think the Weatherization Program is an entire waste ought to bring a bill to do away with the Weatherization Program and take on the issue frontally, that's the only fair thing to do. Is the Weatherization Fund being used, has it been used to do good? I passed out to you the loans that are currently...that have currently been made in the Weatherization Programs, you can see they go...they are currently...have been given to school districts all across the state in huge numbers. The Weatherization Funds have been used, they can calculate, they can actually calculate energy savings of over a million dollars a year that's occurring now, annually, because they have funded these improvements. Now it's true that last year there were only one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine loans. However, one of those loans was...happened to be very large, to the Nicholson (phonetic) Elementary School. But those loans went to small schools all across the district and they totaled about \$460...all across the state, and they totaled about \$460,000. So the first point I would like to make to you is that there is a continuing use, their inquiries for next year total about the same amount. They have \$600,000 worth of loans currently being reviewed. The need is not as great as it was at