

and why it is invalid.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Chambers. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. First off I want to commend Senator Chambers for raising the issue and as he has throughout the session about the role of the Legislature and the Governor's Office and agencies regarding consultants and the whole issues that have been raised by the Maximus contract. I think he's been exactly right to raise the concern about how we proceeded. I know as Chair of the Health Committee I was not made aware of the decision to move forward on this contract until I think it was after the session started. I don't know if Senator Wehrbein or anybody else in the Legislature got any information prior to the decision but I don't think the Legislature was consulted about these consultants until after the deed was done, and I do think that there should be in place a process where there is a chance for the Legislature to have some overview and oversight and perhaps a chance to be involved prior to the decision to commit the state in such a contract. So I was one of the first people to be very upset and concerned about the Maximus contract. On the other hand, I must confess that I feel somewhat responsible for us in being in the situation we are in today and having that contract in the first place because I have argued for years about the need to maximize federal dollars. The Health and Human Service field of the federal government has been ripe for many states in securing millions of additional dollars for their state by simply taking an activity that we're already doing, expenditures we're already making and then using that as a match to federal dollars. We have I think over the years let millions of dollars that were due to us slip away because our administrations over the years had been unwilling to take the steps necessary to try to take advantage of federal funding and federal matches. So on the one hand I've been arguing that and arguing that and we finally got a response and a decision to move forward on this and I am grateful that the Nelson administration did feel that we needed to do that. Unfortunately because of the time constraints we're in, having waited so long over the years to do this, now with the door shutting as the federal government is deciding to cut off various programs and to shut down various funding streams, there is a great deal of worry and appropriately so that if we do not move quickly, the millions of dollars we've let slip away in the past will bring us to a point where the future will likewise leave us at a lower level of federal funding than other