

January 18, 1996

thank you very much.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Senator Beutler, again, you confused me just a little bit. If you'd continue that, what I heard the Speaker say is that there's within our rules already is an obligation, once the Speaker declares something a priority, that the committee chair has an obligation and must schedule it as soon as possible. Your interpretation of this rule is that, no, the power still remains in the committee chair on that. And I guess my only point is I'd like to kind of know which one it is, not that we this year won't have an agreement of how it is going to work, but five years down the line or ten years down the line when maybe you are not here, someone else in the...we have different speakers, they will be looking at just what the words say, and may have a different interpretation. So if we could clarify, does the committee chair, by what it actually says in our rules, if we adopt them today, have still some...some authority to schedule the hearings at their discretion, or is the Speaker correct that they have an obligation to do it then as soon as possible?

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: As I understand the interplay of the rules, the priority bill rule was not changed at all except insofar as the five bill...the five bills that are under discussion are concerned. With respect to those five bills, they would still be affected by the priority bill rules, to the extent that they were priority bills, except as changed by this rule. This rule did not essentially change anything, except to give the Speaker a kind of up-front, written directive to confer with the chair about when these are scheduled for hearing and when they are voted on in committee.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: But it is still, in your opinion for the record, the chair's discretion as to when to do it?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Absolutely.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Thank you.