

February 28, 1996 LB 1039

SENATOR WARNER: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, as I indicated, this is the emergency clause plus a section making an operative section for 1996 for this provision, and I would urge the body to adopt the amendment.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Senator Warner. There are no lights on. Senator Warner, do you wish to close?

SENATOR WARNER: If there's a couple seconds left on the... is there a little time left?

SENATOR COORDSEN: Yes.

SENATOR WARNER: I just want to mention a little bit about the cost of this program because that's been an issue, it's an issue currently, and I understand that. But when we started this change three years ago, one of the concepts was that we were not to spend any more money than what was being spent then on homestead exemption, and still make some accommodations for people who were in most need. And that was \$33 million, was the total level of appropriation at that time. This year it's going to come out actually a little under that, around thirty-two something, but that was what was in... that was the guidelines that we were using. We knew it was going to temporarily go up, which it did. But with this amendment that has already been adopted now, then the cost is probably going to be... I'm going to guess it'd be about 4 million more than was appropriated last year, but because 2 million of that's already been lapsed, or will be lapsed, why it is a 6 million dollar bill. So the net increase over where we started, we're going to be up around a \$38 million cost for this program compared to 33 when we started the whole process. But it is targeted now to those who have lower income. And it's true that some people no longer qualify, and I understand that and I can certainly understand their concerns. But the program is directed to help low income. If you're going to have a low-income program, you got to have a measurement stick. And that's how it works, but I think it clearly helps those most in need, most difficult to remain in their home. And with additional medical costs, it'll even help further for people to be able to stay in their home, probably avoid some institutional costs that otherwise might occur. So that's apart from the amendment, Mr. President, but I'd move adoption of adding the emergency clause.