

SPEAKER WITHEM: Actually, if Senator Chambers would like to open on my amendment, that would be fine also. I would object. Thank you, Senator Chambers. Senator Chambers yields his time back to me. I will open. Let me, as a preface to my remarks on this particular amendment, make a few general comments. General File, I think the body made a pretty strong determination that they want to send a message to the Board of Educational Lands and Funds that they need to begin divesting themselves of the roughly \$335 million worth of land that they own and converting that into other investments. And I will admit to you that the floor debate on 1205, on General File, I thought was excellent floor debate, and it actually moved my position, where I came to the floor assuming that I was going to oppose the . . . a bill that had a self-executing plan to sell the lands and would resist that quite strongly, to the point where I heard the arguments from Senator Bromm, from Senator Wickersham, from other individual . . . Senator Beutler, indicating that probably the time has come that the board needs to get on the ball, come into the modern era and begin to transfer some of this value that exists in land over to other investments, that that would be better for the children of our state and the schools in our state than the current policy of jealously guarding all of this value in land. One of the things I heard from folks like Senator Wickersham and others was that the current value, which is roughly, for a general ball park figure, two-thirds of the value is still invested in land, about a third of the value that previously existed in land is now in other investments. And what I heard was that was an unwise investment, an unwise balance, that nobody in their right mind would have a balance like that. And I bought into that argument. And I plan on supporting 1205, if there is some modification from its current language. Currently, however, the language is, and, Senator Chambers, I agreed with you on the vagueness of the language in the bill, and I think that kind of fooled some of the folks that testified in favor of the bill. I've talked to a few of those folks and wondered why they supported the bill, and their response was, well, we thought it was just a plan and we didn't object to a plan, we'd kind of like to see what a plan would say, and they missed the portion of it whereby it was a self-executing plan. So some of the folks that were in support of the bill at the hearing did so because they had a sense that we were just going to do a plan and we weren't necessarily going to make it self-executing. What I am going to propose to you with the next amendment though is that we buy those arguments we heard, and