

reduction in their salaries, whether that's applicable. The Supreme Court has ruled in an old, old case that, in fact, an office could be abolished and that provision about the salaries, the protection of salaries was in the constitution; nothing directly on point, but we believe it can be done. So the bill sets up time frames on two-year election cycles for mergers and consolidations to be considered by the public. I do think it is important to understand that...

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ..the intent of the committee amendments is to keep these local decisions made with the highest degree possible of citizen participation. There is a direct intent, I believe, in 212 and its incorporation into 1085 to be careful to analyze the proposals to make sure that they work to provide for the widest degree of consensus possible before any merger or consolidation would take place. And, again, I will note that it is all...there are also provisions for citizens themselves to initiate those processes if the elected officials are not responsive to their wishes in that respect. With that, Senator Beutler, I think that's an adequate discussion of those aspects of the committee amendments and thank you very much for allowing us to speak a little bit...a little bit additionally about those provisions.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. Now, Senator Beutler, you're recognized to open on your amendment.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Withem, members of the Legislature, again, the amendment's passed out to you and let me tell you conceptually what I was trying to do. I was trying to build upon this concept that is in 1085. I'm real excited about possibilities for restructuring and encouraging people to do it. There are perhaps three paths, you could think of three paths we could take on this. There's the path of 1085, which is a facilitating path. That is it opens up and clarifies and makes easier and more possible mergers between counties or mergers between certain offices between counties. Four different situations actually it addresses. But it's facilitating in nature. It allows them to do it. The other approach you might take is to mandate some of this consolidation and that's an approach that I think none of us really want to take, much less approach. But there is a middle course which I think makes