

SENATOR CHAMBERS: And, Senator Wickersham, I won't ask you any questions now 'cause there's only a minute left. But when we're undertaking again such a drastic step as we did with 1044, where we were going to merge some of these agencies, people don't have information about the basic issues relative to the existing situation. I admit I don't know all of the answers to these questions, but it's not my bill. I would like to know what the maximum number of county commissioners is and the statutory situation that indicates that there cannot be a greater number than that.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Chambers.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Thank you, Madam President, members of the Legislature. Senator Chambers, I might want to join in Senator Wickersham's discussion here about property tax savings. And let me talk about philosophy just a little bit and then it's fair comment about are there specifics. You have a couple of choices if you're going to address property tax in some meaningful manner. One is that you could say, okay look, there's not going to be as much property tax. We're going to reduce it by a third, the Legislature passes a law that says there's going to be a third less property tax and we have two choices, you either lump it or like it, and you either take that or you find additional revenues to replace the third that we said you couldn't have, that's one policy option. The other policy option is to say, look, we're going to put some limits here on the amount of property tax you can raise. But does the state tell the counties where they have to cut? For example, do you go to your district and say, look, I want to cut here, here, and here, and the state is going to tell Douglas County this is where you got to cut. Then do they go to Senator Jones's district, who may be different, and tell them what to cut? Or do you give those counties the option and the flexibility to make the cuts as the local county boards or the people may see fit? That's a policy choice of do you give them the tools. What 1085 attempts to do is give them some more flexibility and say, look, maybe you don't want to do the consolidations to save property tax, but you want to do the consolidations because it's more efficient to do, or it makes more sense to deliver it in this manner. For example, if you have two counties that would go together I think that may not happen right away, I think they probably would like to keep their county identities. But what