

March 19, 1996

LB 1085

SENATOR WARNER: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, the discussion has been, I think, significant on the committee amendment, which was the bill, and unless there is further comments, why I'd move the bill be advanced.

SENATOR WILL: Now for debate on the advancement of LB 1085, Senator Landis.

SENATOR LANDIS: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I support LB 1085. I urge the rest of you as well. We are, in this state, saddled, it seems to me, with a nineteenth century blueprint for local government. It is not lost, nor do I think it is simply a myth that the rather regular construction of the counties in the middle part of the state were based on the amount of time it took to ride a buckboard all day long to the county center, turn around, be able to do one piece of business, and drive all the way home on one day. It was...it was about a day's travel between county seats. We have the pieces of township government, a New England creation, that in the nineteenth century was very popular across the country, still in our statutes. We are crisscrossed by various taxing authorities, and any attempt, realistically, to cram down from the top by state authority consolidations of those historical entities is doomed to failure. The best we can do is to create tools and incentives from local people to do that reorganization themselves, and I regard 1085 as one of the most important pieces of the property tax package because, in my mind, this is the tool that will get us at least a step forward into moving into the twenty-first century in the way that we should organize our resources and our services in this state. We cannot remain a state of 1,600,000 people, as we have for the last 40 years, with a sparse population, with a wide and vast panorama of distance between our groupings of people, and expect to have a service system that is as up to date as it will need to be without major regionalizations, consolidations, and affiliations. While in the past, we have had the beginnings of the use of the interlocal cooperation agreement and the consolidation of practices, it needs to be the order of the day. It needs to be the marching orders. It needs to be the common practice rather than the exception, which it is today, and LB 1085 poises us on the brink of that rethinking of local government, and for that reason, I urge its adoption. I think of it as one of the most visionary elements of the package and a very necessary piece of work. Thank you.