

SENATOR MAURSTAD: Mr. President, I'd try to make my comments brief. I certainly am supportive of LB 1085 and the other consolidation efforts that's been before the Legislature this year, and will be before it, but I also want to throw just a little bit of caution to the wind because we, as most of the members realize, get a lot of mixed signals relative to what the electorate wants or doesn't want, and when it boils down to it, you're still going to see a great apprehension relative to change regardless of what that change is when it's presented to people. We all have experiences of that from our past, but I just want to indicate that I hope this works. I hope that I'm wrong in my next comment, but I would be very surprised to see a great deal of consolidation of counties occur as a result of this. I agree with the premise Senator Coordsen mentioned about that we are, in fact, turning that decision-making process back to the people at the local level, and I... basically why I am supportive of this, but one thing we haven't give a great deal thought of is that when two counties attempt to get together, you are going to have to do so on somewhat of an equal basis so that it is advantageous to both of the counties, or the multiple counties that are involved. You are going to see, I believe, some reluctance on the part of, I will call it, a healthy county to consolidate with a neighboring county who might be less healthy, and I think that would be rational. Why would a county want to grab hold of an anchor when there might not be a lot of potential benefits for them. So I think this is... this is good in that we are providing that opportunity, but I would caution that I... that I think the impact of this is going to be slow in coming, and, as I indicated, I hope I'm... I hope I'm wrong, but I think if you stop and look at the counties that you represent or the counties that are around you, and look at who this would benefit and who it wouldn't, you'll get a sense of the difficulty that will face a lot of local governments when they try to put in place the provisions of LB 1085.

SENATOR WILL: Thank you, Senator Maurstad. Senator Vrtiska.

SENATOR VRTISKA: Thank you, Senator Will. I think that Senator Maurstad was speaking in my direction, I am not sure, but the main reason I rose is because I wanted to congratulate Senator Landis for his explanation when he talked about, in fact, this is not an issue where we are forcing somebody to do something from the top down but we are letting people from the bottom up decide if this is the thing they want to do, and will it be in