

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.

SENATOR WARNER: ...of a vote. Certainly homestead exemption takes care of many of the smaller ones, but to the extent that you make the levies higher you increase the cost of homestead exemption when, again, mergers may be or cooperative programs may well be the way to reduce that cost. Multiple reasons, I would urge the body not adopt the Maurstad amendment as amended.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thanks, Senator Warner. Senator Maurstad.

SENATOR MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. President, and I hope that we can continue to move forward and adopt the amendment. The...as I've stated before, I agree with a great deal of what Senator Warner has indicated. I believe that even at these levies that small cities and villages, the towns in our state, are still going to have to look at ways to merge, ways to consolidate, ways to provide joint delivery of services when we're taking. I think that will continue to be imperative that they look at doing that. I want to make sure that I wasn't misunderstood relative to LB 1177. I didn't...I understand that those are the best numbers that are available and they, maybe through random process, were able to and are very comfortable with the fact that it is representative of what will occur. But, as he indicated, as Senator Warner indicated, right now we don't have that data available and that's why the assumption had to be made. And so all I'm pointing out is that it may be very accurate; it may not be; it may be close. But I just wanted to make sure people were aware that it's not absolute. The issue with the referendum, the governing board would have to adopt an ordinance or resolution to increase the levy over...over 50 cents. Then, at that point, it would be treated like any other municipal issue in which the citizens have the referendum right. They would have to provide petitions for 15 percent of the votes. These are the same small towns that only need to get 10 percent into a building on a particular night at a particular location. It's only 5 percent in addition to that and they don't have the necessarily leave the coffee table or the coffee house or wherever they might run into somebody that's carrying a petition to get the additional 5 percent. So I think that it's relatively easy to generate the 15 percent signatures. Even in the size of town as Beatrice, about 12,500 people, they've had three referendum issues in the past couple years where they were able to generate enough signatures on a petition, but that's