

speaking or closing?

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: You know, Mr. Speaker, I think I will use this as closing.

SPEAKER WITHEM: You are recognized to close.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Again, members of the body, to be...there are areas for...that are...that we could get into for discussion on this whole process that I don't think we need to get into. The bottom line is when, to be gentle about it, do we need to do the automation? I believe we do. Is it going to be very helpful? Yes, I believe it will be. Has the Exec Board decided yet to do so? No, it has not. What this amendment would do, what this reconsideration would do if you support it, and I pray that you do support the reconsideration motion, is what it will do is we go back to the Coordsen amendment and, quite honestly, the senator either withdraws the amendment or we step...go past it or we vote no if we want to continue and what that would do is it would allow the Executive Board to make the decision on our behalf, which they are authorized to do in the interim, and they can go ahead once they decide what it is they wish to do, they may go ahead on our behalf and to continue to begin the process of automation, which would be the wiring and some of the other things that the 79,000 dollars would cover, but we would not use General Funds. And what we'd be saying to the public, which I think is the proper message to say is, at a time that we're asking people to cut back, we too are going to cut back. We too believe that this is a high priority for us and we're willing to take monies from elsewhere in our budget to cover those costs that we talked about on the Coordsen amendment and, checking with the Fiscal staff, checking with the Clerk's Office, what have you, it is doable. It is doable. We then say, look, we're not increasing General Fund monies on ourselves, on computers. We think it's a high enough priority for us that we're willing to cut our budget elsewhere to make room for it, and that's what we're asking other people to do. Then next year, as we begin doing the biennial budget, the Executive Board, the Clerk of the Legislature, when he represents the legislative chamber and he goes to the Appropriations Committee, that whole process, we look at our budget, we look at what General Funds we may or may not need. We put everything together with all the other criteria and then we make the decisions on whether we go forward or not go