

frustration should not lead us to ignore the issue. And, Senator Beutler, if we could ignore this and think that ignoring it was a solution, I think we would have been happy to do that. But as I've indicated before, we have millions of dollars that have been contributed to the systems by the state, by school districts, by employees. We have, as far as we know now, 538, I don't know where the number 600 came from. You keep hearing 600 members. We think there are 538 people that have elected membership and are in some status that they shouldn't be. We think there are 377 that have not elected any status. All of that adds up to 915. None of those is 600. Maybe that's a quibble, but just there isn't a 600 someplace. It's other numbers and, quite frankly, I'm a little bit disappointed to tell you that even after all of the discussion and examination we still don't know exactly how many people or how many dollars are involved. But at any rate, the point is that there are a large number of potential litigants, Senator Beutler. There is a large dollar amount at stake. I indicated just before lunch that usually those kinds of ingredients are what goes into a lawsuit. And the issue is certainly one that is susceptible to litigation, some uncertainty as to the result, and I am fearful that if the...if the Attorney General...

SENATOR CROSBY: One minute.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ...does not bring litigation, does not frame the litigation in a context that makes it manageable, does not bring litigation in the most economical method that is available to him, that we will have larger problems as others for whatever reasons seek to have the issues determined. That is what finally drove me to recommend to this body that we adopt LR 343 and it's simply...it is as simple as that. We have an opportunity to reduce uncertainty at state expense, and I think it is our responsibility. It was a mistake by our agency. It is our responsibility. Thank you.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Wickersham. Senator Witek on the Beutler amendment.

SENATOR WITEK: Thank you, Madam Chairman, members of the Legislature. I'm fine with the Beutler amendment. I mean if we want another opinion from an expert because we have two differing opinions, that's fine. But you have to remember we do have an opinion also involved in this from the Attorney General.