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planning decisions as early as practical. Actually, we set it back in December. We found out that wasn't as practical as it should be in terms of accuracy. So my understanding is February 1 is a realistic way to perhaps have a compromise, if you will, that the accuracy should be fairly assured, but it still gives those school districts a chance to react. It would appear to me that March 1 starts to get that lead time very close, and so, based on that, I think it's...that February 1 is probably a more realistic number.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator. Senator Wickersham.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I rise in opposition to Senator Brown's amendment. I do not believe that moving the certification date to March 1 is a direction that we want to go. I also disagree that the February 1 date is not attainable with good accurate data. I think it is, even if it forces the Department of Education and some of the school districts to change their processes a little bit. And one of the changes that it might eventually force is the use of electronic filing for some of the information that currently comes into the Department of Education by paper. And then that has to be keyboarded in or punched in, whatever they do with it, and then it's finally data that they can use in their computers. If we made a change to an electronic filing system, and I think that's entirely possible, then you'd save that step. There are other steps that the department takes to verify data, check with school districts when things don't look right. You can't avoid those kind of things, but they should be able to do that on a reasonable basis by February 1 even, as I'm suggesting, if they have to make a few changes in their existing process. Those changes might be for the best anyway. But aside from whether or not the Department of Education can actually accomplish the February 1 certification, I would hope that members of the Appropriation Committee and I think other members of the Legislature would appreciate knowing what the state aid amount should be for a given year as early as possible in our legislative process, and I think that school districts across the state, as they're trying to make decisions about how to adjust to the total resources that are available to them, whether they're more or less than they were the prior year, need as much advance notice as they can get, because they've got to