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LB 1021

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Mr. President, members of the body, the amendment that you have that I think Senator Schimek introduced, thank you for doing that, Senator Schimek. I was engaged with Senator Landis in trying to figure out the last bill. But, at any rate, this amendment I hope you feel is an improvement over the committee amendments. I doubt that it does everything that people who want to examine every aspect of a public official's life may want to do, but I think it is responsive to concerns that we have heard from constituents and others over time. In particular, one of the issues that it addresses is the admissions that we are occasionally granted to various functions, events, football games, basketball games, maybe even a play, maybe some musical event. Those things come around as a matter of course. Some of us attend, some of us don't, but the amendment that you have in front of you would make clear that those kinds of...of gifts or those kinds of admissions would be reported so that people could know if we attended. Frankly, I never did see why that mattered much but it seems to matter to some people and if it matters to them, fine. Doesn't matter to me. If somebody wants to know that I attended a football game, fine. I don't care. People that were at the football game knew I was there. Other people may as well know I was there. Doesn't make any difference. The other issue is one that I think has been kind of a, if you will, a kind of a public relations disaster, and that is the way in which various lobbyists and principals have reported costs. They have reported costs in total for a wide range of things that nobody would ever realistically say were associated with lobbying, such as annual meetings, at which any of us may have been occasionally called to attend to make a speech or to give information or advice about various issues. When we do that they include the entire cost of the event. Or let's say we go to an evening meal, which is the culmination of a two- or three-day meeting and we're asked to go to a lunch or we're asked to go to an evening meal. Well, all of a sudden that whole event gets included in, quote, lobbying costs, when really the only attendance by members was for a very small portion of the meeting and probably it didn't have much to do with lobbying at all. But, anyway, all those costs get aggregated together under the current system. No...one one tries to separate them and the number looks large enough to cause people to be