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FLOOR DEBATE

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Senator Smith. Senator Stuthman.

SENATOR STUTHMAN: Thank you, Lieutenant Governor and members of the body. First of all, I want to thank Senator Beutler for bringing this bill. I think this bill is something that we need to look at and we need to discuss. We need to take some time on this bill, because there are a lot of things that it could affect. One of the things that I have a concern with is that the elected officials of the counties are not realistically supporting this bill, but yet the clerks of the district court, that organized group, they support this bill. I have some problems with that. You know, that group as an organization are supporting it because realistically, today, tomorrow, or in the future, their position will still be there. Now, but the county boards, the county boards are the ones that are in control of those offices, of those county offices. They're in control of the budgets of those offices. They're also in control of everything that happens there. I think the county boards are looking at it in a realistic fashion as to, you know, what will happen, you know, when that job or task of running that office is not there anymore, but they're still going to have to have an office for them, they're going to have to, you know, fund the office. Those are some of the questions that I have. Senator Beutler also says that it's going to be a \$6 million property tax relief. Yes, it will probably be a property tax relief. But in my opinion, it's a tax shift, and realistically, it's going to cost a little bit more than what we're paying from property taxes right now. But there is one thing that, you know, I think is of value in having the state take over it. There's some value to the court systems mainly because the county court system is already under the jurisdiction of the state, but the clerk of the district court is not. That's still under the county part of it. I think that some of the smaller counties, there can be better utilization of staff, you know, that one can work in the other court when needed. That's the good part of it. The thing that also concerns me is that in a lot of the smaller counties, which, the majority of them are opposed to it, I think looking in the future that there's a possibility that some of those offices will possibly be closed. Maybe they'll be manned by one person for both of the court systems, the county and the clerk of the district court will be