

March 21, 1975

PRESIDENT: The amendments are adopted. Senator Lewis.

SENATOR F. LEWIS: Mr. Chairman, I introduced the bill on behalf of Frank Lewis. This is my bill. My idea. My thoughts. Let me tell you that the reason that brought those about, last year we made the provision to make sure we had an election . . . a run-off election, a general election for school boards. Believe me that paid off. We provided that if the bill was contested, and Senator Murphy helped work on this, that if the school board elections were contested that we would have a general election. In my own community last time there were 15 people that ran for 3 slots on the school board. Two of the incumbents were among the 6 nominated, but didn't run in the top 3. In the general election, when it was reduced, and the total population voted, those 2 people were brought back into office. At the same time that was happening there were 7 people running for Mayor. There were at least 2 contested council spots. What happened was that we ended up with less than majority representation. This is no reflection on the Mayor, or no reflection on those councilmen that won by (inaudible) rather than majorities. One of the great reform movements that happened in this country in terms of election reform was the institution of the primary, to get the decision making out of the cloak rooms and into the ballot box. One of the important aspects of democracy, and those democratic elections, is the fact that that representative of the people be the representative chosen by at least the majority of the people. Our current system does not cater to that. Our current system caters to the fact that 20 or 25 percent of the people who voted can determine the elected public officials. In no way is that sound. In no way is that correct. I know there are arguments that say that that makes it too long for people to run. How well most of us know how long it is to run from May to November. You cannot sacrifice one of the basic tools of democracy, one of the basic philosophys of a democratic election, and that's the primary. Many states have gone to the extreme that they have primary run-offs for partisan elections. There will be a democratic primary, then they'll have a run-off primary, in case that individual is not the nominee is not the choice of the majority of the people that even vote in the primary. I think the bill is sound. I think the philosophy is sound. I think the arguments that I've heard against it are superficial. They are technical. They are a matter of convenience. There are certain principles we cannot violate for technicality or for convenience. Mr. Chairman, with those remarks I would ask that this Legislature advance to E & R . . . or to Select File . . . E & R initial however, LB 323.

PRESIDENT: Senator Marsh.

SENATOR MARSH: Mr. President, I have a question for Senator Lewis please. When, in your community, is the budget set for your community?

SENATOR F. LEWIS: The budget, I believe, would be adopted, in probably by the council, in August . . . in July and certified by the county board in August.