

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Thank you, Madam President. I will speak briefly, and I appreciated Senator Brashear's opening remarks. And if the Speaker expressed or felt some frustration on this issue, no less frustration has been felt by myself and others. It is and has been a frustrating debate every time this issue has come up on the floor of the Legislature in my brief tenure here. We have not been able to do a very good job in this body of addressing the issue of the allocation of judicial resources. That's the reason that we reinstated the Judicial Resources Commission a couple years ago. And I happen to believe that that is a process that can work as a fact-finding body, as a body that can make recommendations to us for implementation in legislation. The criteria that you see for the study on page 2085 are more extensive than any criteria we have placed in statute before, at least to my knowledge. And if you're familiar with the budget, you know that there are monies in the budget for the Court Administrator's Office to conduct a study. There are also funds available by grant and, regardless of what anyone else has said about the position of the State Bar Association, I have heard the current president and the next president and the president after that state that the Bar Association will, indeed, make a study concerning the allocation of judicial resources, that they will bring forth results for examination by the Legislature, and I think the Bar Association will be responsive to the concerns that the Legislature has about the use of judicial resources, given our limited funds with which to pay. But, be that as it may, as Senator Brashear has indicated, I believe there is more to the allocation of judicial resources than simply caseloads or weighted caseloads, as you will now be hearing about them. When this issue first came up in the Legislature, we argued about simply caseloads. We knew how many dissolutions had been filed in a district court. We knew how many felonies had been filed in a district court, etcetera. We didn't much more about them and, in fact, we weren't even sure about some of those basic facts because of the way the Clerks filed their reports. We also weren't sure that the numbers were completely reliable because of the way the county attorneys and the judges directed that some actions be filed in the district courts. You might find multiple pleadings for a felony case where there were multiple counts in one county and you might find one filing with multiple counts in another. You might find tax foreclosure proceedings that were split up in individual actions in one county and concentrated in one pleading in another county. You might have found other