

April 12, 1979

LB 421

Opposed no. The motion carried. The bill is advanced. Now...thank you, sir. Senator Murphy, we're now ready for your motion to return 421 to Select File for a specific amendment.

SENATOR MURPHY: Mr. President and colleagues, I don't know, I have a certain uneasiness about the way we are coming heir to our election law changes. Last year at the ninth hour we got an assortment of election law changes that as a consequence received no committee hearing and simply were advanced to the floor attached to another bill. Now we are coming again with a series of amendments that are the equivalent of a full bill with very little opportunity to inquire or look into the prospects offered. The committee failed to act on the original bill because of this, and yet we are accepting on the floor a portion of that bill as an amendment to another bill, and I think we make some of our finest mistakes when we engage in this process. I would call your attention to Section 10 of the amendments, on Page 25. In there the Secretary of State is proposing that we discontinue verifying signatures on petitions if there are twelve more names out of a hundred on that petition than those that are required. I have rather strong feelings about our government and our election procedures, and the safeguards that have been built into them, and the requirements that we need in order to create an initiative or a petition law. I think we are fooling with one of the most powerful provisions of our Constitution and we're now going to say that the change can be made without verification of the fact that those signing are indeed qualified voters. I think this is a tragedy. The claim that it would save some money is unfortunate. My state is not for sale. If a county clerk does not have time to, in fact, verify those signatures, then I think money is well spent in some additional help if it is needed. I have been through the experience of a petition candidate, circulating petitions in order to have his name placed on the ballot, and in my very unpolitical expertise I did not oppose that proposition even though those petitions probably had a thirty percent error in them. That is my prerogative as a candidate not to oppose an opponent in this manner, but I do not think it is proper for the Legislature to say that we are going to remove the safeguards on initiative and referendum amendments to our Constitution for the expediency of saving a clerk of some county his statutory duty of verifying the fact that signers of a petition to change the Constitution are, in fact, qualified. I ask that this bill be brought back