

in support of the Speaker. I don't know why we are suffering this momentary loss of self-confidence. I think things are going along as smoothly as they ever have in this Legislature in the three years I have been here. And I don't see why we are quivering here. But let me...I did want to speak just for a minute and put this priority bill, this new priority bill system rule, in just a little bit of perspective. The priority bill system rule wasn't designed to solve all problems. It was not designed to take away from the Speaker his prerogative to decide in many instances what are the most important things to the state. That is his obligation under the rules now working in conjunction with the Executive Council to decide which issues are most important to the state and to get them up on the agenda. The priority bill system impugned on that prerogative only to the extent that we wanted to see that individual Senators and individual committee chairmen had some absolute input into that system. And the Speaker's obligation, the Speaker's one and only obligation under that rule is this, the Speaker shall structure the agenda of the Legislature so that all priority bills are given an opportunity to be voted upon for final passage prior to the end of the annual session. I think that the Speaker does have the obligation to be careful and to see that all priority bills are going to be heard. But at this point in the session, I don't think anybody can say that there is an absolute danger that that is not going to happen. Now beyond that obligation, under this rule the Speaker has no obligation, and what happens is we resort to what happened with all bills a year ago and for all time before that. What happened last year and what happened every year before that? The Speaker set the agenda working together with other people in the Legislature and a decision was made as to what was important, what was most important. That same process will take place with regard to the priority bills. The only obligation the Speaker has is to be sure that all of them are heard at least once, and so far as I can see the Speaker is fulfilling that obligation, and certainly at this point in time it is premature to say that he is not. Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Labedz.

SENATOR LABEDZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday...and first I want to go into something that Senator Chambers just mentioned. He talked about having a lottery on priority bills and this surprised me also because he has always been against bingo and any type of lotteries, state lotteries or any type of gambling, and now he wants the