

system. It deals principally with associate county judges. Associate county judges through the years have been nonlawyers appointed by the county judge that can operate for the county judge under certain circumstances. This bill changes the title of associate county judge to clerk magistrate, allows the clerk magistrate to serve several counties instead of just one, thereby performing more efficiently because he or she has more territory to cover, provides also that the clerk magistrate will be appointed by the Supreme Court to provide uniformity, and generally shaves back the authorities that individuals serving in this nonlawyer capacity have. The committee considered and adopted a number of amendments, as I indicated, principally to restrict the authority, to narrow down their authority over civil and criminal cases as much as possible consistent with the efficient administration of justice. The committee is recommending to this body an amendment on a different matter, somewhat different matter, an amendment that would allow cases involving parental right terminations to be appealed directly to the Supreme Court from the county court on an expedited appeal. This amendment was also noncontroversial, was adopted, I believe, unanimously, originally unanimously in the committee. So the committee amendments then do two things. They amend LB 529 to sharpen it up a little bit and they add this provision allowing an appeal directly from the county court to the Supreme Court in parental termination cases and provide that those kinds of cases should be expedited. Again, this is a bill that is important in terms of bringing up to date the duties and the functions of associate county judges hereafter to be called clerk magistrates. Since the major court reform effort in the early '70s, this is kind of a cleanup doing some of the remaining things that need to be done from that court reform measure in the early '70s, and I would be happy to answer questions anyone might have about the committee amendments or about the bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Higgins on the committee amendments.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It doesn't look to me like there is anybody in the Legislature, and I am wondering if anybody else has looked at this like have. Senator Hoagland, would you be good enough to explain to me, in the original bill on page 2, line 9, it says, "Clerk magistrates shall be appointed by the county judge, or