

SENATOR CARSTEN: The question is, shall the committee amendments be adopted? All those in favor vote aye, those opposed vote no. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 27 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on adoption of the committee amendments.

SENATOR CARSTEN: The committee amendments are adopted. Now, Senator Johnson on the bill as amended.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. President, I have attempted to adequately address the bill as we will probably see a change. However, to discuss the bill in its present nature, I would have to say that the bill would redirect the economic development efforts in this state for agriculture from DED to the Department of Agriculture and expand their ability to be involved in ag development. That was the goal that we set out with by introducing this bill. It has since become evident that we need to change somewhat the direction of this particular measure and, as I said, we are working on a compromise now that I think will effectively address my concerns for doing more for ag through the development efforts but doing them within the existing framework of the Department of Economic Development. And I believe Senator Wesely may want to follow up on my conversation here with his own remarks. But with that, I would just simply urge the bill to be advanced today so that we can continue the negotiation process and, hopefully, come up with a good bill that sends a very positive message to agriculture and the Department of Economic Development.

SENATOR CARSTEN: Thank you, Senator Johnson. Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. I would first like to commend Senator Johnson and the members of the Agriculture Committee on their work on this issue. Obviously, we all care a great deal about agriculture and much more needs to be done to promote it and develop it. This plan was one that was met with some opposition about the movement from economic development to agriculture to take over some of these functions. We can see that some adjustment can be made and we are negotiating with the administration on how best to handle it. But, clearly, more can be done, more needs to be done and I think we are seeing some movement on the issue.