

SENATOR WITHEM: Yes, Madam President. Members of the body, I served on the Government Committee for most of my time in the Legislature, and I recall when we, under the very able and competent leadership of our Chair, Senator Baack, last year wrestled with this question that was brought to us by some folks in the rural areas where they were having difficulties finding people to serve on, say, a Class I school board that didn't already hold a position on, an example I remember, a natural resources district. And we were faced with any number of solutions, none of which were very attractive. And so we hit upon just basic repeal of the dual officeholding statute. We chose not to make that applicable to members of the Legislature and the state constitutional offices. Whether we had a good rationale at that point or not I, frankly, don't know. My concern is I think I'd like to ask you to look at where we are in our process. What we are doing is we have a bill on Final Reading. We are being asked, by two of our colleagues, to attach an amendment to that bill that basically benefits one group of individuals, the sitting members of the State Legislature. We're asked to do that without having had a bill introduced, without allowing the public to come forward and testify on whether or not they think it is a good idea to have sitting members of the Legislature be allowed to file for more than one office: I think it's a bad precedent. I think we're opening ourselves for a great deal of criticism, if we were to slip an amendment onto a bill that has had no public hearing, the concept has had no public hearing, and really only benefits us. It would be akin to our raising our salary, or setting up some new benefit for us by an amendment onto a bill. I think, if this is a good idea, which I have questions as to whether it is, but if it is a good idea, it really needs to come to us in the form of a bill introduction and a public hearing. For that reason, specifically, I will not be voting for the Coordsen-Chambers amendment.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Withem. Now recognize Senator Moore, followed by Senators Johnson, Coordsen, Wesely and Haberman. Senator Moore.

SENATOR MOORE: Pass.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Senator Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Madam President, members, I rise to support the amendment. I feel like I should be neutral on this issue