

its companion legislation.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Senator Crosby, to discuss the bill.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. Yes, I do rise to support the bill. And as a member of appropriations, I've been doing as everyone else and trying to watch all these A bills. Eut I think I'd like to call to the attention of the body that the Ombudsman's Office has grown since it was first instituted, just as every other arm of state government seems to have enlarged. As people realize that there is a mechanism that they can get help, then more calls, more letters, more people come in to try to get some help with an argument or whatever they're having with a state agency that they can't seem to get an answer. This doesn't reflect necessarily on the agencies, it's just that people don't always have the same feelings about what they're arguing about. And the reason I am speaking today in particular is because there was an editorial in the Journal, this past week, a signed column that talks about the good old days in the Legislature, when the Legislature met only every other year, and when legislators were elected for only two years, they did not have a full-time staff, stenographic pool and so on. One of the things mentioned in that column was the constituency services. But it's very difficult for a State Senator to refuse to help a constituent when he or she calls, even if you're at home. I don't see how, in the good old days, they got out of that, do you, Senator Wesely? I do think that the Ombudsman's Office was instituted for that very thing. And, as Senator Wesely says, because of the focus on what's happening to children these days, we do need someone with a specialty and the time in that office, because of the fact that the workload has increased so much over the years. I think as a whole they do a very good job. I've had two cases that the Ombudsman helped us tremendously, and that were resolved well, and I thank them for that. So I just wanted to bring that little bit of history to you, and I'll vote for the bill, Senator Wesely.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Crosby. Senator Schmit, did you wish to discuss the bill?

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President and members, I'm always a little apprehensive when Senator Wesely wants to improve one of my bills, especially one which has operated for 20 years, like the Ombudsman Office and the Department of Environmental Control.