

what Senator Vrtiska's concerns, had arisen, but there were also the safety factors and there were other groups who necessarily hadn't been fully involved in this debate and who came up and said, look, we do believe that a mandatory system, if it's good for one, it's good for all, and in terms of safety, that's the best thing to do. I know that I, personally, made representations to people coming out of committee that this was an optional bill. Now, if they aren't present today because they relied on my representations, then that's my fault. But that's the information that I had at the time the bill came out of committee that I had and operated under. I also told those people that down the line this system needs to be mandatory, at some point in time down the line. Now, whether to get it started it should be an optional system to begin with, you will see several states. For example, I know Colorado is...started off at least as a voluntary membership system; Iowa, our next door neighbor, is a mandatory state. I think the movement certainly in the country is to a mandatory system. If you move to a mandatory system, you will certainly bring other players, in effect, other people, municipalities and so on. There are those that oppose the mandatory system because of cost, they don't know what it's going to do to their rates in the future. However, those rates are greatly, and the service is greatly affected by those who interrupt the service. And there's a balancing act for those that just don't want to have anything done versus the need for safety. And as a committee Chair, I am not going to actively oppose the Withem amendment, because I believe, down the line, that that's probably where we're headed with this. Now, Senator Pirsch, who has chosen to make this her priority bill, I think, I'd be interested in hearing your comments of what you perceived from committee. But there were at least a number of committee members who felt that when we passed this bill out it would be an optional service bill. And so that's sort of a background of where it came out of committee and what people made discussions and what representations were made to them. Ultimately, I do think that you will see this state move to a mandatory system. But there may be a number of people...

PRESIDENT MOUL: One minute.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: ...who relied upon this being an optional system for their support, at least initially, or their concern. With that, Madam President, I'd be happy to answer maybe some other questions. I think Senator Withem probably has framed