

county government. The state took over that function, and at that time the general assistance program was considered and originally was part of that merger. Later that was backed off and then the counties retained that obligation. But the issue remains the juxtaposition of the state responsibility with the counties in dealing with our poor, and I think we need to revisit that issue some time. So I'm suggesting that the better course of action at this time is to try to incorporate the county role into the ongoing studies that we're going to be doing and the further work that we'll be doing on this issue to see what kind of responsibilities they'll have. And we should consider again the sort of system that we have in place, and perhaps there will be adjustments we'll want to make reconsidering again the general assistance role of the counties. Those are all issues of importance. By taking the step Senator Will is talking about I'm worried about the counties not having that adrenaline of fear or concern that he's expressed, and with that they might be willing to prod and push and have the state consider their position and reconsider the relationship that they have. Senator Byars has worked previously on a county-state relationship issue and we need to continue working on that because this is an example of where...what the state does may impact the counties and vice versa. But I also want to say that the state potential dumping, let's say, of these individuals onto the counties is much, much reduced as a result of the committee amendments and the other amendments we have adopted. We no longer have the absolute two-year cutoff. We talk about jobs, we talk about extreme hardship, we talk about the assistance continuing on health care and child care, and so I don't think the county fears need be as great as they once were, although they were legitimately concerned, I think, early on with the drafts of the proposals. But that fear should not be as high currently, and I would not want to totally take them out of the picture, so I'd oppose the Will amendment, but I would think the issue he raises is very important and one that we should look at and work at much harder than we have, and hopefully during the course of the interim come back with some ideas on this relationship that can enhance the role of the counties and the state that is mutually beneficial. So, again, I oppose the Will amendment, but I appreciate him raising the issue, it's a very important one, and we can address it further as time goes on as we work on the legislation. Thank you.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Senator Crosby.