

P U B L I C H E A R I N G

before

ASSEMBLY REVISION AND AMENDMENT OF LAWS COMMITTEE

on

ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTIONS NO. 83 and 84
(Organization of Legislature)

Held:
June 16, 1972
Assembly Chamber
State House
Trenton, New Jersey

MEMBER OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Kenneth A. Black, Jr. (Chairman)

* * * * *

RECEIVED

OFFICE

COMMISSIONER OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY

OF

THE STATE OF NEW YORK
(Department of Labor and Industry)

TO:

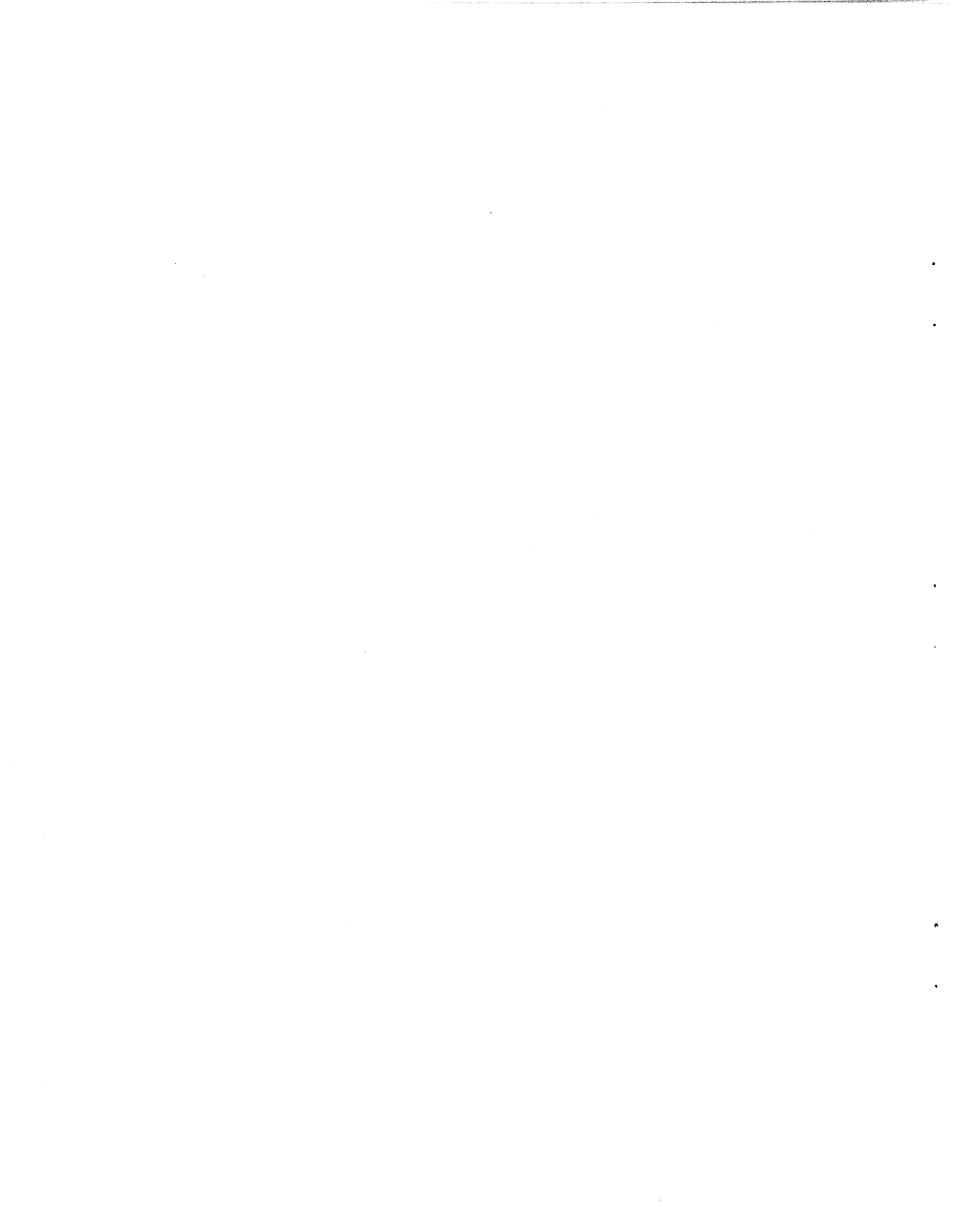
STATE HOUSE
ALBANY, NEW YORK

NUMBER OF COPIES PRINTED

ASSEMBLY MANUSCRIPT NO. 123 (Chairman)

I N D E X

	<u>Page</u>
Carl Golden representing Assemblyman Richard W. DeKorte	1
Statement submitted by:	
Ann E. Levine, Chairman Legislature Committee League of Women Voters of New Jersey	4



ASSEMBLYMAN KENNETH A. BLACK, JR. (Chairman): The public hearing being conducted by the Revision and Amendment of Laws Committee on Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 83 and Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 84 will now come to order.

The agenda of individuals giving testimony today will consist of two representatives, the first to be a representative for Richard W. DeKorte, Assemblyman, District 13b, the prime sponsor of both of the Assembly Concurrent Resolutions.

At this point, would Assemblyman DeKorte's representative come forward to present his testimony.

C A R L G O L D E N: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The following is a statement by Assemblyman DeKorte. He is unable to be here and he asked if I would fill in for him, which I will gladly do.

ASSEMBLYMAN BLACK: Would you state your full name for the record.

MR. GOLDEN: I will be glad to. My name is Carl Golden. I am employed by the Republican Leadership in the Assembly, including Mr. DeKorte.

ASSEMBLYMAN BLACK: Thank you.

MR. GOLDEN: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to submit to the Committee today my testimony in support of two Concurrent Resolutions I have introduced to amend the New Jersey Constitution.

Both of these resolutions are designed to facilitate the operations of this Legislature by establishing constitutionally our procedures for organization.

Assembly Concurrent Resolution 83 is uncomplicated in its content, providing simply that the two houses of the Legislature convene separately on the second Tuesday in December of each year to organize and select officers.

Assembly Concurrent Resolution 84 provides that in the event neither political party has sufficient members to constitute an absolute majority, the Speaker of the Assembly or the President of the Senate shall be selected by the members

of that political party which received the largest number of votes cast on a statewide basis in the last election for members of the Legislature.

The intent of ACR-83, Mr. Chairman, is to permit the officers of a newly-organized House several weeks to appoint committee chairmen, select committee members, organize staff, and carry out the myriad duties involved in leadership offices. Under current rules, officers of either House are selected on the day the Legislature convenes its new session, thereby telescoping these duties into an extremely short time span.

ACR-84 bears directly on the difficulties encountered in this House at the start of this legislative session. I know, Mr. Chairman, you are thoroughly familiar with the situation as it existed at the start of this year and I do not intend to recount the difficulties we experienced at that time.

Let me just say that the possibility for a repetition of a political division of the House is a very real one and one which we must recognize and deal with.

ACR-84 is, in my opinion, a vehicle by which we can establish an equitable and realistic procedure for the organization of the House and election of its officers. It will not, I feel confident, penalize either major political party nor will it preclude either party from participating in the legislative policy-making in either House.

But, beyond that, Mr. Chairman, I am sure you will agree that the workload in the Legislature has increased greatly over the past few years and will most certainly continue to grow. This has placed enormous time pressures on all the members of this Legislature. Legislative demands have become an increasing part of our five-day-a-week business lives, and promise to become an even larger part as time goes by.

Because of this, it is my firm belief that the faster the legislative machinery can be put into operation, the greater our efficiency can become. To spend weeks and

possibly even months attempting to organize and select officers in a politically deadlocked house of the Legislature can, and will, be disastrous for the people of this State.

As long as the potential for such a protracted deadlock exists, Mr. Chairman, we must face up to it and address ourselves to the task of finding a solution.

It is my conviction that the Constitutional amendments I have introduced and which the Committee now has under its consideration are viable and practical alternatives to the current system.

I would strongly urge this Committee to report these Resolutions for action by the Legislature and placement on the general election ballot for referendum.

That concludes Mr. DeKorte's statement, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN BLACK: Thank you very much, Mr. Golden.

The representative of the League of Women Voters has indicated that the League will submit written testimony at the earliest possible date.

Are there any others who desire to give testimony relative to Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 83 or No. 84?

Apparently there are none. Consequently, let the record indicate that the public hearing on Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 83 and Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 84, proposing amendments to the State Constitution, was held by the Revision and Amendment of Laws Committee by direction of the General Assembly in accordance with the procedure for consideration of proposed amendments to the Constitution, directed by the Constitution and the Rules of the General Assembly. Be it further indicated that the public hearing commenced at approximately 10:15 A. M. on June 16th, 1972, and concluded at approximately 10:26, the same date.

If there are no further witnesses to present testimony, I hereby proclaim that the public hearing is closed.

(hearing concluded)



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW JERSEY

460 BLOOMFIELD AVENUE, MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY 07042 TELEPHONE 746-1465 AREA CODE 201

June, 1972

STATEMENT SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON THE REVISION AND AMENDMENT OF LAWS FOR INCLUSION IN THE PUBLIC HEARING RECORD ON ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTIONS 83 and 84 BY THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW JERSEY.

Since only one week's notice of this hearing was given, the League did not have time to prepare testimony and arrange to be present at the hearing. Our comments on the two proposed constitutional amendments follow.

ACR 83 would amend the constitution of New Jersey to provide for a pre-session meeting of each house of the Legislature to organize and select officers every December. In principle this is an excellent idea, since it would mean committees could be chosen, familiarize themselves with their subject matter and start work on pre-filed bills. The newly elected leadership would have ample time to schedule the work of the coming session.

However, the proposal provides for such a pre-session meeting every year, imbedding an opportunity to change leadership every year into the constitution. The two-year legislative term amendment passed in 1968 only provided that bills and other pending work of the legislature carry over from the first year to the second year of a term. It did not require that the two houses reorganize each year. The proposed amendment would. Continuity of leadership and committee work is a practically universal recommendation of those concerned with strengthening and improving the work of state legislatures. The lack of such continuity has always been one of the most serious criticisms of the New Jersey Legislature, made by the Eagleton Institute in its 1963 study and the League of Women Voters in its study of the Legislature among others. The Beadleston Commission recommended two year terms for leadership and committee positions, with consideration to be given for even longer tenure. Though we do not necessarily agree with the Citizens Conference on State Legislatures in its ranking of the New Jersey Legislature in comparison with others, we do think many of its recommendations for improvements are valid, including the one recommending that the practice of rotating leadership cease.

Therefore, we suggest that this constitutional change be amended to read: "The Senate-elect and the General Assembly-elect" (if that is the proper terminology) "shall convene separately on the second Tuesday in December prior to the beginning of the two year legislative term for the exclusive purpose of organization and selection of officers for the succeeding two year term."

The League agrees that it would be desirable to provide a statutory or constitutional method for choosing leadership in the event that neither party obtains a majority in either house, as happened this year to the great detriment of the work of the whole legislature. However, we have not made the kind of study which would permit us to recommend one method over any other, and thus cannot support or oppose any proposal at this time.

Nina McCall, President

Ann E. Levine, Chairman,
Legislature Committee



