

KELLY: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the fifty-fourth day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session. Our chaplain for today is the Right Reverend J. Scott Barker, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska in Senator Hunt's district. Please rise.

J. SCOTT BARKER: Good morning, friends. Let us pray. Gracious God, we affirm your presence among us as this legislative day begins, and we offer our praise and thanksgiving for all your graces. Give us grateful hearts for the blessings of this day. For seasonable weather and the beauty of the Nebraska landscape in which we dwell, may be-- we be faithful stewards of the Earth whose care you have entrusted to us. For the journey of life that's brought us to this moment, including our families, friends, and all those who've shaped us most profoundly along the way. We pray you'll continue to expand our notion of neighbor and give us hearts to serve and care, especially for those who are hurting, disenfranchised, powerless, or outcast. We pray for all the senators present this day and for those with whom they share the privilege of public service, for our President Donald, for our Governor Jim, and for all of the mayors of the towns from which we hail. For all those who serve in the judicatory across this state and nation. Grant that the women and men assembled here might meet the work of this day with grace. Help them to be their best selves. Help them honor your image and all their colleagues. Help them be thoughtful and honest and kind. By the mercy of your spirit, give them clarity of mind and conviction of heart to seek after what is right. Help them know when to compromise and when to fight on. And remembering the count which they must one day give to you, may you so guide them on this and every day that they may know your blessing and your peace at the end. We pray all these things in the name of our loving, liberating, and living God. Amen.

KELLY: I recognize Senator Lonowski for the Pledge of Allegiance.

LONOWSKI: Please join me, my colleagues. I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

KELLY: I call to order the fifty-fourth day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, First Session. Senators, please record your presence. Roll call. Mr. Clerk, please record.

ASSISTANT CLERK: There is a quorum present, Mr. President.

KELLY: Are there any corrections for the Journal?

ASSISTANT CLERK: I have no corrections for the Journal.

KELLY: Are there any messages, reports, or announcements?

ASSISTANT CLERK: Yes, thank you, Mr. President. Senator Bosn has amendments to LB504. Transportation and Telecommunications Committee will meet in executive session today at, at-- in Room 2102 at 10:30 a.m. Transportation and Telecommunications, Room 2102, at 10:30 a.m. The Government Committee will hold an executive session today in Room 2022 at noon. And the Business and Labor Committee will hold an executive session today at 1, 1-- excuse me-- 1 p.m. in Room 2022. That's all I have, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Bosn would like to recognize the physician of the day: Dr. Rachel Blake of Lincoln. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Sorrentino has a guest under the south balcony: his son, John, from Denver, Colorado. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. While the Legislature is in session and capable of transacting business, I propose to sign and do hereby sign LR80, LR81, LR82, LR83, LB84, and LR85. Mr. Clerk, please proceed to the first item on the agenda.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President: General File, LB258. When the Legislature considered the bill last, the bill was pending before the body, as well as a motion to indefinitely postpone by Senator Conrad pursuant to Rule 6, Section 3(f).

KELLY: Senator Raybould, you're recognized for a two-minute refresh on the bill.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, fellow Nebraskans watching on TV. Quickly, I want to just refresh you on what the minimum wage bill is, is doing. It is working with what the voters had approved in 2026. January 1, the wage goes up to \$15. My bill proposes that instead of increasing it annually, tied into the CPI index, we'll increase it at a fixed rate of 1.5%. The second part is a youth wage, making sure that we can still hire 14- and 15-year-olds at \$13.50, which is the minimum wage right now, and that would be increasing every five years at 1.50%. And then there's the training wage right now in Nebraska statutes that the ballot initiative did not touch. Our, our current training wage for 90 days is 75% of the federal minimum wage, which wou-- is \$7.25, which would make that \$5.44. We're asking voters and my colleagues here that are

voters to loo-- re-- look at that and make an adjustment to \$13.50 so no one would be subjected to being paid \$5.44. And that would have an annual increase of 1.5%. I also want to remind my colleagues that so many businesses came out in support--

KELLY: That's time on the refresh, Senator.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator Conrad, you're recognized for a refresh, one minute, on your motion.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues. I'm asking you to indefinitely postpone this measure which not only undercuts the will of the voters but also picks the pockets of Nebraska working families. It imposes caps and carve-outs on a minimum wage law that was adopted by Nebraska voters at about 60% in 2022. The negative business impacts that proponents of this measure have brought forward just have not come to fruition, and the statistics bear that out. And we'll have more time to debate it today. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Conrad. Returning to the queue. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, Nebraskans who are watching on television, online, and, of course, the Twitter posts, retweets of the floor debate. So I rise in opposition to LB258 and in support of the motion from Senator Conrad to indefinitely postpone LB258. I support the decision of the voters to increase the minimum wage and then to put into statute a permanent, regular increase in the minimum wage. And so my opposition to Senator Raybould's bill is multifaceted, but I'm specifically opposed at the moment to where Senator Raybould puts into the statute a 1% cap in the increase. So the ballot initiative language said that the minimum wage goes up in a stair-stepped approach for a few years. And then when-- in 2026, once it's topped out, then in 2027, it'll start going up based off of the CPI-U Midwest-- which is a number you can google-- but it's maintained by, I think, the Department of Labor. And it is the Consumer Price Inte-- Indexed Urban for the Midwest that they track. And it says it'll go up by the, the percentage every-- different every August. OK? And-- so that is a googleable number. And you can-- everybody, anybody who voted on this ballot initiative could have googled it in 2022 when this was on the ballot. And that was on purpose. The voters had voted in 2018-- or, maybe it was earlier than that. 2014. Whenever it was. There was the first ballot to go up to

the \$9 an hour. And then, obviously, that was stagnant for a long time. And the voters felt that there was a need again to increase the minimum wage and did not want to need to continue to return to the ballot box. So that's why there was put into the statute a increase in the minimum wage based off the CPI, which is to keep up with inflation. So when you passed \$9 bal-- minimum wage, it was \$9 for-- you know, on par for whatever the purchasing price was that year. And then every year thereafter, the purchasing price decreased. And so that was the point for the voters, was to get us back up to a similar purchasing price or similar value for the minimum wage and then to have it continue to go up so it doesn't erode. And so pegging it to, to the CPI means that the purchasing price of the minimum wage will stay in parity with the-- with inflation. If you, if you artificially decrease the increase-- which is what Senator Raybould is doing here at 1.5%-- then you are going to continually erode the parity or the value of the minimum wage. And so Senator Raybould did say that she pegged this at 1.5%, which was the average, I think, of the last ten years. She handed out-- and I'm sorry I didn't get my paper ready here. But the average of the last ten years up to 2020. The thing I would say is if you include 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, then the average is much higher than that, because inflation went up to 8% in 2022. And my point is, in saying that, that if Senator Raybould's bill was in effect at that point in time, the minimum wage would go up 1.5% but inflation would be 8%, which means that the purchasing price of that minimum wage would have eroded dramatically in proportion to that. And there are years in that previous ten years where the CPI was less than zero, meaning-- I assume, under Senator Raybould's analysis-- would mean that it would just not grow. So you'd have some years where there would be no growth in the minimum wage and you'd have other years where the, the inflation would be three, four times what the growth is, but it would be pegged at 1.5%. So I'm-- what I'm saying is that this is a fundamental divergence from what the intention of the ballot initiative was, the intention of the voters who voted for this. And I think it is the wrong approach to this. And I have more to say about those very exciting numbers and my analysis of them, and-- so I will punch my light to keep talking about it. I hope folks, you know, can listen. This is an important conversation. And I know it's early in the morning and everybody likes to get settled in and talk about what they watched on television last night or whatever it is that everybody talks about in the morning, but I would say it is important to have a conversation about what the problems with this are. I know there are people who want to say, you know, this is tough on businesses and have-- whatever it is their perspective that justifies undermining the will of the voters. But there are truly legitimate reasons why the

voters voted the way they did and why we should respect that. And we're going to keep talking about it today.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Can I go ahead and get a gavel to start with? Thank you, Mr. President. I just wanted to reiterate what Senator John Cavanaugh was just saying, which is it gets a little loud in here in the mornings when people are settling in and talking. And I understand we have to have side conversations-- that's part of the job-- but I do agree when you're on the mic and it's very rambunctious-- when you're watching at home, you can't hear, but there's a lot of conversations happening behind us sometimes and it gets a little bit loud, so. Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, I do rise today in favor of the motion to indefinitely postpone and opposed to Senator Raybould's LB258. I know we're going to have a little bit of time today to talk about the various issues with this bill, but at the end of the day my objections to LB258 come down to two major points. One, it's yet again walking back the will of the people and imposing a policy decision which fundamentally and substantively changes what the people voted for on a ballot initiative, and I have problems with that, especially when we are this early in the ballot initiative going into effect. And then two, from a policy perspective, I guess I have a problem decoupling the increase in the minimum wage from that CPI the way that it's contemplated by part of Senator Raybould's bill. And in conjunction with that, I have an issue with paying people less for the same work. And when we're talking about a youth wage that is separate and apart from the other, the other minimum wage, I just-- I think that we continue to erode the fundamental value that I believe in, which is equal pay for equal work. And I think we create a system that is so separated out at that point that it's treating people separately in a way that's problematic. So those are my two major objections. Again, as always, comes back to the process and content. But I wanted to start today by talking a little bit about the change in, I, I guess to put it simply, how much things cost. You know, we always hear about how back in the day things were a lot cheaper. I think Senator Holdcroft made the point yesterday, which I appreciated, that when he started working at minimum wage, it was \$1.50? \$1.65. And so, obviously \$1.65 would not fly today for minimum wage-- and obviously that's because things have gotten more expensive. But when you look at studies about whether or

not, I guess, things have increased in a, in a way that is a straight line or whether it's been sort of commensurate with that, that minimum wage, it's really fascinating to see the purchasing power changes over the last, say, 50, 60 years. And Senator Cavanaugh also kind of touched on purchasing power, so he took the wind out of my sails a little bit on that one. But I wanted to, I guess, underscore that with some of the information that I found when I was looking at this last night. Current young generations, Generation Z, have, statistically speaking, 72% less purchasing power than baby boomers did back in their 20s. Home prices have risen by 1,045% since 1973. The cost of public and private school tuition has increased by 177% and 158%, respectively, since the 1970s. So there's been this shrinking value of the dollar that has happened since the early to mid-70s that has been noticeable. And I think why it matters to point that out is we are talking about a minimum wage that seeks to at least get closer, I think, to a living wage. Certainly, I think that, you know, working for minimum wage-- especially if you only have one job and if you have dependents-- is not a living wage. And that's problematic. But if, if our goal as a Legislature is to set a minimum wage that accomplishes some semblance of, of living wage or purchasing power, then we need to make sure it's keeping up with the shrinking value of the dollar over time. And we heard some debate yesterday about, you know, setting the minimum wage at the, the, the lowest cost of living state and that would apply then to everybody else. But at the end of the day, I, I think that it is problematic when we set the bar so low that people doing some of the most valuable work that everybody in this body and everybody at home in Nebraska utilizes on a day-to-day basis, it's problematic when we set that bar so low for those people. And these are the kind of jobs that everybody in here would fall apart if they couldn't go utilize some of the work that people who get minimum-- paid minimum wage for do. But yet we don't value that work at the same level that we should. And so the shrinking value of that dollar I think is vital to take into consideration when we're talking about the numbers. I think when some people see the numbers, \$15 per hour on paper, they think to themselves, that's wild. But they're comparing it to the past, and we need to keep up with the times as we evolve. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Dungan. Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak.

GUERECA: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, fellow Nebraskans watching. I don't know. I don't think there's anyone here, but watching here in the, the gallery and at home. Good morning, colleagues. I rise in opposition to LB258 and in support of the IPP

motion. So I generally stay in town but went home last night. And on the way in this morning, I stopped to get a cup of coffee. I generally don't stop to get cups of coffee at a local coffee chain. And I know we're not supposed to use props so I'm not going to lift it up, but the iced coffee that I had cost me \$9. Things are getting expensive. Life is getting expensive. On the drive in, I thought about who this legislation would a-- affect most. And I, I, I appreciate the attempt to frame it as a training wage. And certainly for, for some young Nebraskans, it is just that. But let's talk about who this is really going to affect. It's the young person who maybe doesn't have the familial support when it comes to being able to pay the bills or put money aside for college, because they understand that when they get to school, the money that they save up is all they're gonna have. And it may not seem like a big thing, \$1.50 here, \$1.50 there. But when you have just enough or when you're a scholarship student, that \$1.50 here and \$1.50 there adds up. And I think that's the part that gets me the most, is that this isn't gonna affect the person, the young Nebraskan that has that familial support, that support system, the aunts and uncles that'll help them up, the grandparents that are able to provide the offset for that \$1.50. But the reality is, for far too many Nebraskans, that \$1.50 could be the difference between them having to work those extra hours while in school and it affect their grades. And again, that-- that's the part that gets me the most, is, who that \$1.50 actually matters to. And it's those that don't have as much. And again, we're, we're minimizing their worth. This isn't a handout. This isn't a generous gift from state government. This is us as a legislator saying, your value as a worker, your ability to swing a hammer or to use a shovel values less to us. And that's OK. Now, I personally have a problem with that. The-- I think the, the, the swing of a hammer, whether it come from a 17-year-old or a 50-year-old, it's that hammering at the same speed. But, hey, that, that could just be me. So that's, that's what I ask, fellow Nebraskans. When you cast that green or that red vote-- I don't think it's gonna be today. Probably at some point tomorrow morning-- think about who this is gonna actually affect. Think about who that \$1.50 actually matters to. It's the people, the young Nebraskans, that actually need it, that need it the most. So when I cast my red vote when the time comes, to those young Nebraskans who that \$1.50 matters the most, I'll be there with you. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Guereca. Senator McKinney, you're recognized to speak.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of the motion to indefinitely postpone LB258 because I oppose it. And I oppose because

89.6% of my district voted in support of the initiative to raise our minimum wage. And Senator Guereca just really struck a chord with me when he said, think about that \$1.50 and think about who that \$1.50 affects. And I think about the kids I coach who, during the wrestling season, are not only going to school, they're not only pursuing their athletic dreams, but they're leaving practice early because they have to go to work. They're like, Coach, I gotta leave practice at 4:30. I have to leave practice 4:45 because I have to go to work. They're not going to work just out of-- just a hobby, just to go to work to work. They're going to work because they have to. They're going to work to take care of themselves and their families. That's what that \$1.50 will affect, is their earning potential-- not for themselves but for their families. So that's what I think about. And that's what this will affect. And that doesn't go without thought. And that's what we should all think about because protecting somebody's bottom line and not thinking about the impact on somebody's living condition, somebody's situation, how do you balance that? How do you think about that? Because the data doesn't show that an increase in minimum wage impacts the business environment. I still haven't seen the research. I know there's been articles placed on my desk that I'll, I'll look through and I'll see if it's, you know, contrary to what I've seen thus far. But from what I've seen up till-- up, up until today, increases in minimum wage are good for everyone. Good for the economy, good for our people, and good for business. And limiting the earning potential, especially for young people, frustrates me because I work with young people. And I work with young people that work, that work to take care of themselves and their families. And they are not in the greatest con-- like, situations, just being honest. And, you know, as a coach, you're like, I wish you couldn't leave practice 30 minutes early, 45 minutes early because I think you need to work on this shot or this setup or, or, or, or, or this way to get off bottom. But I understand why they are leaving early. Because it's more important for them to have a place to live, food to eat, lights to, you know, turn on in, in the home than to work on a, a wrestling move. Because I've been in those situations before where you go home and something is off. And I don't believe the proponent of this piece of legislation considered that. The people went to the ballot box and voted for this because this body elected not to move something forward out of committee multiple times. I wasn't the only senator that had introduced legislation to raise our state's minimum wage. And I still think \$15 is too low. But that's me. And that's debatable for some people, some economists. I, I, I just think it's too low because it, it didn't keep up with inflation. And that's the issue that we're, that we're grappling with, is that businesses and-- didn't raise wages

like they should have and, and didn't keep up inflation. And then the people were like, you know, we're, we're fed up. We're tired of working to, to survive. And we're just trying to make it. And they-- and they're still living paycheck to paycheck on \$15, but at least it's something better. And-- especially for the young people. And this is attempting to strip it away, and that is just sad. I don't even-- thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator McKinney. Senator Riepe, you're recognized to speak.

RIEPE: Thank you, Mr. President. My interest is for a minimum wage that makes or keeps Nebraska competitive or maybe even a little bit greater than our peer border states. That said, we also must have balance, some restraint, and we also make sure that we look out for the well-being of the taxpayers, the businesses, if you will, that are paying those taxes. And with that, I would like to yield the balance of my time to Senator Raybould.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Riepe. Senator Raybould, 4 minutes, 20 seconds.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Senator Riepe. Thank you, Mr. President. You know, I wanted to continue this discussion on it. And I know my colleagues have said, well, there's no statistics, there's no numbers. I'll certainly get into those in a minute. But I have to remind my colleagues here that, you know, when we had the hearing at Business and Labor, we had the Lincoln Independent Business Association, the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association representing the Nebraska Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association, Nebraska Retail Federation, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Commerce of Kearney speak there. We had a grocer from Fres-- Fresh Season Market. We had the president of the Nebraska Hospitality Association, founder of the Ohana Hospitality group, Nebraska Bankers Association, National Federation of Independent Businesses. And why do I bring this up? These are organizations that represent the small business owners, the day care centers, the restaurants, your friendly neighborhood banker, the retailer, the home health care provider for our seniors and loved ones when we, when we need them. And I think it's important to remember that. The one thing I also want to bring to everybody's attention-- I don't know if everybody read the numbers. I know we're certainly talking about how our, how our constituents voted, but does anybody realize that there were three organizations all outside the state of Nebraska that spent \$3.5 million back in 2022? And I'm just gonna read the organizations that did this. It's the Service

Employers-- Employees International Union, it is the Sixteen Thirty Fund and the Fairness Project. So they spent \$3.5 million on the ballot initiative, whereas you choose to listen to some of the misleading things they say about some of the elements that we're trying to incorporate here without undermining the will of our voters. And again, I, I quote Groucho Marx. Who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes? And in this case, who are you gonna believe, me-- because clearly it sounds like you're not-- and then are you going to listen to those small businesses in your community? Have you reached out to the day care centers and asked them how are they gonna handle this minimum wage? You know, I have put a lot of handouts on your desk this morning, and so I apologize profusely for what I've done and, and how many trees I've killed. But my colleagues are always challenging me. Like, there's no data. There's no statistics. And so I handed out a policy brief from Employment Policies Institute on the key findings talking about at-risk youth, the impact of a \$12 and a \$15 minimum wage on teen employment. And I just went through it and circled just some of the key bullet points. And I'm going to read them here for you so that you understand that sometimes this does have consequences. And I feel so misinterpreted on the intentions of why we're trying to re-- to create that \$13.50 wage for 14- and 15-year-olds so you'll consider hiring them. Here's some of what it says. Over an 18-year period from 2000 to 2018, the share of employed 16- to 19-year-olds fell from 46% to just 30%. Each 10% increase in the minimum wage led to a decrease in employment growth for teenagers by 2.2% over a three-year period. The final one is, a decrease in the broader minimum wage combined with a youth wage for teens would be the best deterrent against job loss. And on the handout, it further shows you exactly how many jobs would be lost in our state of Nebraska. And before, I gave the example of the day care center that lost seven families. That means one of those parents had to stay home. That means we've lost that seventh family member in our workforce. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator Quick, you're recognized to speak.

QUICK: Thank you, Mr. President. And I rise in support of the motion to indefinitely postpone. And I also oppose LB258. I'm just going to talk a little bit about, you know, what, what, what goes on in Grand Island. So, you know, we have a pretty diverse population. We have families who live paycheck to paycheck. We have-- I would say that even some of the youth who are working some of these-- some of the jobs that would be affected by the-- by this-- by the change that Senator Raybould is looking for are actually helping their families out. They're, they're making that, that, that income to, you know,

maybe have some money for themselves. But they're also helping their family out so that they can, can get by. As a parent of, of-- well, what used to be teenagers-- my children are all grown now-- but I always encouraged my children to go-- you know, if they were going to go out and work, besides playing sports and doing those type of things, that they needed to find, you know, a job that paid them well enough that they could help pay for some of the-- maybe if they wanted a cell phone or if they-- especially on car insurance. Car insurance for teenagers is fairly high. So if they wanted to, to, you know-- I, I did pay for those things for them, but I know there are parents out there who, who would have their-- wouldn't be able to afford that and would have their children try to provide that for themselves, as well as a, as a car, saving for college. I knew some of the high school kids that would come in and work for the city in the summertime. And they were saving for their future college funds and providing those things for themselves. I can tell you that over time that-- I know we've talked about the cost of living-- wages, for that matter, have not kept up with cost of living, as well as the minimum wage. The minimum wage has not kept up with the cost of living over time. And-- so with that, I'll yield the rest of my time to Senator Conrad.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator. Senator Conrad, 2 minutes and 40 seconds.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Quick. I, I, I think it's important that we contextualize some of the statistics that proponents of this measure, like my friend, Senator Raybould, are throwing out there. Their true argument is with a minimum wage in general. It's not really quibbling about this measure. And colleagues, our country decided and ended that debate in 1938. So let's be clear about that. And let's also be clear about what our eyes show us in Nebraska, Senator Raybould. We're number three in the country in terms of the best state. We're consistently in the top ten of the most business-friendly states in the country, including presently. And that includes the fact that we have a higher minimum wage. And even though we have a higher minimum wage than some of our sister states-- which, by the way, another cherry-pick-- our sister states of Iowa and Kansas don't have citizen initiative. They don't have citizen initiative, Senator Raybould. And the sister states that do have citizen initiative, like Nebraska, have a higher minimum wage. So when the people have an opportunity to engage in self-governance as they have in regards to this issue, they see modest but meaningful increases as important. And that's exactly what happened when the people voted on this again a few years ago by 60% margins. And they didn't have carve-outs for kids. And they didn't have caps on increases. They wanted minimum wage to help keep better pace with inflation because

everybody knows gas and child care and medical care and transportations and groceries cost more. And I've heard Senator Raybould and others say, well, it's not even a living wage. But then their solution is to have people make less money? That is perverse and cruel and ridiculous in terms of a policy argument. Nebraska has over 54,000 jobs open today. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. The list of terribles that you've trotted out against minimum wage have been part of the debate since the 1930s, and they haven't come to fruition. That is what your eyes tell you. That is what voters understand even if the business and political elite in this body seek to pick their pockets with this measure, which is exactly what is happening. Kids would make less than 1,000-- \$1,000 less a year under Senator Raybould's proposal. And who's making up the difference?

KELLY: That's your time, Senator. Thank you, Senator Conrad. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Every time. Every single time. Am I the only one that gets shocked every time they touch the microphone? I feel-- and I'm standing on a rubber mat. Every single time. No? Yes? I guess I am. OK. I rise in support of the motion to postpone-- indefinitely postpone and opposed to LB258. I was listening to the one-minute sort of recap this morning. And I do appreciate Senator Raybould's portion that changes the training wage, so. I was listening, Senator Raybould. And I, I didn't realize that it was tied to the federal minimum wage. That is kind of bananas that we would allow people to be paid \$5 an hour. It's also bananas that people would take a job that pays \$5 an hour. I don't know how you can even afford the gas to get to the job at this point. Costs are going up significantly. Just in 2025, costs have been going up and up and up and up. And, and I know we all are feeling it. I went to the grocery store over the weekend, and my grocery bill for the same things that I buy week after week after week was significantly higher than the week before. And, and my wages haven't gone up. And they're not going to go up. And so I understand that, you know, businesses need to have profit margins, but I also understand that people need to feed their families. And I've been listening to stories about inflation and what families are doing, and then also the stock market. So, you know, retirement funds and things like that are a little bit more in flux right now. And, and we, we all are, are, are suffering to some degree, but that doesn't mean that we should make those who make the least suffer the most. We should be doing what we can to lift up our lowest wage earners to ensure that they can also provide for their families. And like so many families, my family, we have to make some decisions

about our budgets and, and what can we rein in more. What can we cut from our spending right now as our grocery bill grows and-- I haven't bought eggs in a couple of weeks, which really stinks because my kids love eggs. And so that's-- like, this past weekend, that was-- I usually make eggs for the kids on Saturday and Sunday mornings. And we didn't have any eggs, so I made oatmeal, which is fine. And I do a fun thing where I make an oatmeal bar for them and they get to put their-- pick their toppings, and so they feel like that's kind of special and decadent. It's raisins and bananas and cinnamon. And they get to pick what things they want to put in. Sometimes when they're in season and on sale, I'll-- they'll be strawberries. But essentially, it's usually raisins, bananas, and cinnamon. Or peanut butter. Peanut butter and bananas in your oatmeal is an excellent choice. I highly recommend it. But anyways, we're making choices and we're cutting back and we're not eating the same things that we were eating a couple months ago, including eggs regularly. I would always make dozen eggs-- hard-boiled eggs on the weekend for the kids to have for a snack during the week. So my wage isn't going to go up, so I'm making cuts. And I can afford to make cuts because I still had lu-- some luxuries in the grocery area. But a lot of families, they have nowhere else to cut. And we need to be lifting them up. And this minimum wage is a huge step in that direction. And I, I just can't go against that. So I appreciate the conversation. I, I appreciate that we all have our own experience to bring to this conversation, but I'm going to remain in opposition to LB258 and in support of MO7 to indefinitely pros-- postpone pursuant to Rule 6, Section 3(f), which is a different-- than just indefinitely postpone for those of you that like to follow the rules at home. This is a different IPP than a different IPP, so. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator Raybould, you're recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. You know, I appreciate the discussion and Senator Cavanaugh acknowledging that the, the training wage needs to be changed because being at 75% of the federal minimum wage at \$5.44 an hour is, is truly bananas. You know, we've talked about our wage and trying to help fellow Nebraskans. And increasing the minimum wage to \$15 and every year after that at a predictable 1.5% will still help families. I know my colleagues are saying, you don't understand. Our young people help their families. And I want to say to my colleagues, you don't understand that folks are not going to hire 14- and 15-year-olds. And so how can they help their families if they actually don't get a job? The other thing I wanna say is that right now Nebraska's minimum wage at \$13.50 going up to \$15 January 1,

2026, that'll put us at the 18th highest in the entire United States. We're competing with other states on the East and West Coast, where their cost of living is so much higher. In our state of Nebraska, our state of Nebraska is the tenth lowest in the entire United States for cost of living. And so when I bring up this initiative of trying to find a balance, that's our job as Legislatures. We find a balance between what our voters voted for and what our economy and our state of Nebraska can sustain. Why is this important? Well, you know, I've, I've handed out at-risk youth, the impact of \$12 and \$15 minimum wage on teen employment. And I respectfully ask that my colleague, Senator Conrad, just take the time and read it. And after she reads it, she's more than welcome to debunk it. But there's some things that need to be said. And this is from The New York Times. Those at greatest risk from a higher minimum would be younger, poor workers, who already face formidable barriers to getting and keeping jobs. It's true that the costs of raising the minimum wage vary depending upon conditions. And the cost won't always translate directly into dramatic job losses. There are many ways businesses can absorb these costs by raising prices on their consumers-- which we are seeing-- by replacing employees with machines-- which we're seeing-- or by reducing hours-- which we are seeing if you took the time to talk to small businesses-- which in some cases would mean that workers make more per hour but less per week. So I want to repeat that. They would get reduced hours. They might be making more per hour, but they get less hours. And therefore, they are making less. The Federal Reserve Bank has been watching this issue very closely for a number of years, particularly the Consumer Price Index and inflation. And I just want to quote something that came out in March. It-- it's talking about the higher core personal consumption expenditure, PCE, inflation, with the Federal Open Market Committee projecting a 2.8% core PCE inflation-- so they're saying inflation is at 2.80%-- to its previous 2.5%. So we're seeing the trend already for inflation being projected to increase. While these changes aren't dramatic, they raise concerns about current and future trends. Inflation risks are always a key fed consideration. This is what the fed chair, Jerome Powell, just said in March. Some near-term measures of inflation expectations have recently moved up. Consumers and businesses are mentioning tariffs as a driving factor. President Trump has already raised tariffs on some foreign goods in the U.S. imports, with more tariffs potentially on the horizon. We know that President Trump will be announcing additional tariffs starting on-- tomorrow, April 2 and April 3. And believe me, the markets are very jittery about this. But more importantly, the tariffs are going to place a greater impact on consumers and cause additional inflationary concerns. So when you put all of this

together-- I'm asking my colleagues that what we're proposing is reasonable in light of a tremendous amount of uncertainty on the horizon. And I ask that you consider the proposal that does not derail or undermine our voters. It puts some commonsense fiscal guardrails going forward so that our businesses can continue to employ our fellow Nebraskans and stay open. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator Lippincott would like to introduce and acknowledge some guests in the north balcony: 84 fourth graders from Engleman Elementary in Grand Island. Please stand and be recognized. Senator Hardin has some guests under the south balcony: his nephew, Brad Hardin, and his great-niece, Charlotte Hardin, both of Grand Island. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Returning to the queue. Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to speak.

HOLDCROFT: Question.

KELLY: The question's been called. Do I see five hands? I do. The question is, shall debate cease? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Been a request for a roll call vote. Mr. Clerk. There's been a request to place the house under call. The question is, shall the house go under call? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 30 ayes, 3 nays to place the house under call, Mr. President.

KELLY: The house is under call. Senators, please record your presence. Those unexcused senators outside the Chamber, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. All unauthorized personnel, please leave the floor. The house is under call. Senators Armendariz, DeBoer, Dover, and Bosn, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. The house is under call. Senators Armendariz, DeBoer, and Dover, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. The house is under call. All unexcused members are present. Members, the question is, shall debate cease? There was a request for a roll call vote. Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Senator Andersen voting yes. Senator Arch voting yes. Senator Armendariz voting yes. Senator Ballard voting yes. Senator Bosn voting yes. Senator Bostar. Senator Brandt voting yes. Senator John Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Clements voting yes. Senator Clouse voting yes. Senator Conrad voting no. Senator DeBoer voting no. Senator DeKay voting yes. Senator

Dorn voting yes. Senator Dover voting yes. Senator Dungan voting no. Senator Fredrickson voting no. Senator Guereca voting no. Senator Hallstrom voting yes. Senator Hansen voting yes. Senator Hardin voting yes. Senator Hardin-- excuse me. Senator Holdcroft voting yes. Senator Hughes voting yes. Senator Hunt. Senator Ibach voting yes. Senator Jacobson voting yes. Senator Juarez voting no. Senator Kauth voting yes. Senator Lippincott voting yes. Senator Lonowski voting yes. Senator McKeon voting yes. Senator McKinney voting no. Senator Meyer voting yes. Senator Moser voting yes. Senator Murman voting yes. Senator Prokop voting no. Senator Quick voting no. Senator Raybould voting yes. Senator Riepe voting yes. Senator Rountree voting no. Senator Sanders voting yes. Senator Sorrentino voting yes. Senator Spivey voting no. Senator Storer voting yes. Senator Storm voting yes. Senator Strommen voting yes. Senator von Gillern voting yes. Senator Wordekemper voting yes. 34 ayes, 13 nays on the motion to cease debate, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. The debate does cease. Senator Conrad, you're recognized to close.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Again, good morning, colleagues. I want to lift some voices from the past and some voices for the present and show the importance of young people engaging their government for positive change. There are so many young people visiting us each session in each spring, including today. And even though they don't yet have the right to vote due to their age, they have a role in society and they have a role in many of the businesses that are vibrant and operating in Nebraska, and fair pay should follow to them for fair work. When the minimum wage was first put forward in the 1930s in response to the Great Depression and child labor atrocities, actually one of the driving forces that got FDR to really champion a federal minimum wage was when a young girl came to one of his campaign stops as he was campaigning in Massachusetts. She tried to pass the president a note. She was blocked by a police officer. FDR instructed the offi-- the, the aide to go and get the note. And the note from the 11-year-old read: sir, we've been working in a sewing factory. And up to a few months ago, we were getting minimum pay of \$11 a week. Today, 200 of us girls have been cut down to \$4, \$5, and \$6 dollars a week. Responding to the little girl's plea, Roosevelt was resolute in creating a minimum wage law. That policy, that minimum standard, has carried forward for over 85 years. And when Congress fails to act, states have an option and an opportunity to make fair work pay. And when legislators failed to act-- and the people are not a lower house, Senator Raybould. They're a coequal authority for legislating. The people multiple times in Nebraska have said we want modest, meaningful

increases in minimum wage. We have the highest percentage of workers working year-round, full-time, living in poverty. We have the highest percentages of both parents working outside the home. And yes indeed we have young people in the workforce who are young parents themselves, who contribute to their families' bottom line, and who are saving for college. And let's talk about some of the voices of the present. Young voices have petitioned their government opposed to measures like this, this year and in the last biennium. We heard from people like Emma Haar, who talked about the fact that she was 15 years old. Her and her family live in poverty. She turns over her paycheck to her parents. She balances extracurricular activities, doing good in school, and her pay periods to help her family keep their head above water. She has little to nothing to save for things like college. And this initiative helps her and her family. We heard the same message from Ace Grim. We heard the same message from Ann Day [SIC]. We heard the same message from Alexandra [SIC] Combs. Present voices of young Nebraskans who work are petitioning their government to maintain fair wages for their fair work, which brings value to Nebraska's vibrant business community. Carve-outs and caps are not part of what the citizens approved, and it's not for you to second-guess it. That's a basic respect for democracy and a basic for young people who are trying to do the right thing and save for their future and help their family. Google the article about Marco in Schuyler, who works 16 hours at two jobs before he shows up at high school in Schuyler minimum-- Senator Raybould. He works 16 hours before he showed up to high school, and he's like hundreds of kids in Schuyler. Trying to get a better life for him and his family, going to school, working multiple jobs. And you want to take \$1,000 out of his pocket and make his life harder. Go talk to black youth. Go talk to young women. Go talk to Native American youth who suffer the most debilitating poverty in our state. You have championed their causes. You have lifted up policies to help have better equity. And you seek to undercut the ability--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

CONRAD: --of young workers, Native worker, Hispanic workers to have fair pay for a fair wage.

KELLY: Tha-- thank you, Senator Conrad. Members, the question is the motion to indefinitely postpone. All those in-- request for a roll call vote. Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Senator Andersen voting no. Senator Arch voting no. Senator Armendariz. Excuse me. Senator-- voting no? Senator Ballard voting no. Senator Bosn voting no. Senator Bostar. Senator Brandt

voting no. Senator John Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator Clements voting no. Senator Clouse voting no. Senator Conrad not voting. Senator DeBoer voting yes. Senator DeKay voting no. Senator Dorn voting no. Senator Dover voting no. Senator Dungan voting yes. Senator Fredrickson voting yes. Senator Guereca voting yes. Senator Hallstrom voting no. Senator Hansen voting no. Senator Hardin voting no. Senator Holdcroft voting no. Senator Hughes voting no. Senator Hunt. Senator Ibach voting no. Senator Jacobson voting no. Senator Juarez voting yes. Senator Kauth voting no. Senator Lippincott voting no. Senator Lonowski voting no. Senator McKeon voting no. Senator McKinney voting yes. Senator Meyer voting no. Senator Moser voting no. Senator Murman voting no. Senator Prokop voting yes. Senator Quick voting yes. Senator Raybould voting no. Senator Riepe voting no. Senator Rountree voting yes. Senator Sanders voting no. Senator Sorrentino voting no. Senator Spivey voting yes. Senator Storer voting no. Senator Storm voting no. Senator Strommen voting no. Senator von Gillern voting no. Senator Wordekemper voting no. 12 ayes, 34 nays on the motion to indefinitely postpone, Mr. President.

KELLY: The motion fails. I raise the call. Mr. Clerk for a motion.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President, priority motion: Senator Conrad would move to reconsider the vote taken on motion-- on, on, on the motion to indefinitely postpone.

KELLY: Senator Conrad, you're recognized to open on the motion.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Again, good morning, colleagues. When people ask me how this legislative session is going, it's really hard to describe exactly how this session's going and how it feels. The best sort of description I can share with them is that every day feels like a Dickens novel. Every day, political and corporate elites come in to attack the working poor. That's the primary hallmark that the 2025 Nebraska Legislature has charted for itself thus far. Whether it's attacking gig workers and denying them basic employment protections, whether it's undercutting the will of the voters in regards to modest earned sick leave benefits for working families, or now, whether it's attacking the will of the voters and putting artificial caps and carve-outs in place for our lowest paid workers, including kids. The political and corporate elite in this state and their useful tools in this Legislature are happy to pick the pockets of low-income working kids. That's where we are. That's what the green and the red says on the board. And everybody knows it. You can tell yourself whatever story you need to tell yourself to sleep at night,

but everyday Nebraskans understand. They understand our economy is vibrant. They understand wages haven't kept pace with inflation. And they put forward modest but meaningful adjustments to minimum wage to help working families succeed and to help reduce reliance on public benefits, which saves taxpayers money. We continue to be one of the top states in the country to do business, including with this legal framework. We continue to be one of the best states to live in, according to a variety of metrics. But that doesn't mean that all Nebraskans enjoy the good life. Proponents of this and other measures cherry-pick different statistics from other states or other articles or what have you, and they fail to remind themselves and others that minimum wage increases directly benefit 150,000 working Nebraskans. Working. Working Nebraskans. 75% of those who make minimum wage in Nebraska are 20 years or older. Over 54% of people who make minimum wage have a family income of less than \$50,000 a year. 21% of people who make minimum wage-- including young people, Senator Raybould-- are parents. And they're not all emancipated. Emancipa-- they're not all emancipation minors. They're young parents. 61% of minimum wage workers in Nebraska are women. 23% of the minimum wage workers are workers of color. 55% of minimum wage workers are working and living in poverty. 40% of minimum wage workers are working full time. And the others are working multiple jobs beyond full time. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country, consistently and presently. We have one of the highest percentage of people working outside of the home. We have one of the highest percentages of labor force participation. We have one of the highest percentages of people working two and three jobs, including minimum wage jobs. What does that do to families and communities when mom and dad aren't there to coach the little league team because they're at their third job that pays minimum wage with no benefits? What does that mean for moms and dads who can't help their kids with their homework because they're at their second or third minimum wage job? And I see Senator Raybould's laughing under the balcony. And you know what? We all need some leviny-- levity in these grave debates. So perhaps she heard something humorous about that. But I don't think it's funny. I don't think it's funny to undercut the will of the voters and to make it harder for working families to succeed, including kids who are working to contribute to their family bottom line or help themselves have a better future. And you know what? I don't understand why somebody like my friend, Senator Raybould-- who will always be my friend-- but I have a sharp and serious and consistent policy disagreement with on these issues. Why did she prioritize a measure to expand and protect voting rights last biennium? She doesn't trust voters to be able to have the agencies to participate in our democracy. Or it's a reminder

from her and others that you can only have what we let you have. You don't honestly have a full and fair voice in your democracy. You can organize. You can get hundreds of thousands of signatures to get something on a ballot-- which, by the way, all the voters read and had read to them. You can run a campaign to ask your fellow Nebraskans to vote yay or nay on a measure like modest earned sick leave or modest minimum wage increases. And you know what? The political elite and the corporate elite didn't even bother to run a campaign. Didn't even bother to trot out all of these tired excuses and list of horrors which never come to fruition and have been tested over 85 years of minimum wage policy. They didn't bother to even run a campaign. The Grocers put up \$25,000 in 2022. That's nothing, and everybody knows that when it comes to a statewide initiative. I'd venture to say they spent more on tailgate parties at the Governor's Office. But they knew they would come in here and they would find, hopefully, 33 senators who were just fine with honoring their own election results but undercutting the will of the people when it came to workers' rights, health, safety, and dignity through earned sick leave, through modest minimum wage increases. And if you campaigned on that, that's a different story. You were honest with your voters. If you said, I'm going to run to Lincoln and prioritize out of hundreds of bills that have been introduced measures to undercut your will and hurt working families-- if, if that's what you campaigned on, that's cool. Then you should stand up and talk about your campaign experience in that regard. But if you weren't honest with your voters about your intentions, you should be voting no on these measures. Neb-- Senator Raybould has also lifted up a few anecdotal examples from her colleagues in the busine-- in the grocers community which mirror her own experience and financial self-interest in regards to this measure. But let me also lift up some other voices for business owners in Nebraska because, you know what? Business doesn't speak with one voice on these measures. And as part of the campaign that was successful in 2022, hundreds of Nebraska business owners, including small business owners, lent their names in support of this measure. Hundreds. Citizens organized and found hundreds of small business owners across Nebraska that support minimum wage increases because it increases productivity. It reduces turnover. It saves training costs. It boosts morale. It funnels money back into their small businesses and local economy. Multiple small business leaders and owners in my district were a part of that campaign and spoke in favor of minimum wage increases. Other business leaders, including very conservative business leaders, noted that modest minimum wage increases aren't what's driving business costs. It's shipping. It's tariffs. It's inflation. It's insurance. That's what's driving business bottom lines

and tough decisions, not ensuring fair pay for fair work. I am gleeful and happy to stay on this measure for eight hours, four hours, two hours, as long as it takes because it's important to my district--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

CONRAD: --it's important to this state, and it's good policy.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Conrad. Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues and folks that are joining us either virtually or somewhere in this building. I support the motion to reconsider the vote, as well as the indefinitely postpone of LB258, and stand in opposition of the bill as is. And want to just uplift a few points as I talked about yesterday and continue some of the important conversation that is in front of us. To Senator Conrad's point, I wanted to underscore and highlight that I do think the underlying issue is minimum wage in general. And this body needs to be transparent and thoughtful in just saying what it is. If you look at the bills that have been in front of us and the conversations around policies that impact working people, it's that. It's that people have an issue with supporting working families, low-income folks, folks that are figuring out how to make ends meet and are trying to change their economic trajectory and sustainability. We are undercutting policies and practices that will allow for that to happen. And so I think we need to be real about that and start having real conversations as it relates to that. Citizens did not pass with the ballot initiative a carve-out. So as it's been stated numerous times, you can put forth the petition. The AG writes the language. You put forth what you get signatures on. There are particular processes in place to maintain the integrity of getting something on the ballot for voters to decide, and that happened with this initiative. You do spend money on ballot initiatives because you have to let people know about the campaign. You wanna make sure that they have full information. And that same critique around who spent what money was not upheld when we talked about the anti-abortion ballot initiative. No one is talking about the millions in millions of dollars three political families put into that ballot initiative to spread misinformation that is actually documented with specific reports to the AG's Office. And so this initiative was upheld by the folks. There are policies and practices that allow for it to have integrity. People were read the, the question. It did not have a carve-out for youth. And so it's concerning to me that this body is introducing legislation that would carve out for some of our most vulnerable among us a

different wage, whether it's a training wage or not. To me, that is not acceptable or permissible and is not our role within the Legislature to change what our voters have said. There's been a lot of conversation about data and data points. And again, you, you kind of sway. If you have data this way, it shows this; if you data that way-- and so there's actually a case study from New Jersey. The New Jersey Policy Perspective published what their experience was around lifting up a minimum wage, their process into that. They had a number of different carve-outs. And they specifically talked about, for youth workers, their carve-out, which was under 18. They were exempt from the state wage in hour law, and-- which-- they concluded that it was harmful. And so that-- they saw a lot of impacts for young people that were working at the laundry mat, the cleaners, light manufacturing, that there was this carve-out for them that they would make less than a minimum wage and that there's a common stereotype that young workers are simply using their earnings to pay for video games and movie tickets, but that was further from the truth. Many are seriously contributing to their family's income. For teen workers who come from families that earn less than \$50,000 per year, they contribute over \$9,300 on average, or 18%, to their families' income. For families of color, teen workers contribute \$9,600 on average, or 19%, to their family income. And so, again, I think it's important that if we're going to talk about data points that we're really situated in case studies that have actually happened in other states and that have proven that youth carve-outs, specifically in what LB258 is trying to put into law, is actually harmful. And they have the data points to show why it was harmful and the, the value add and contribution that young people actually make not only to their families but to their economies-- to the economy. I will punch back in because I do have some data actually around day cares as we ran a doula-- a day care pilot through my nonprofit around what is actually impacting their businesses. And I, I want to make sure that we uplift and level set around some narratives that I don't think are actually aligned around what is causing some of our small businesses that are crucial to workforce, like day cares, to not be successful. And that is not in minimum wage. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Spivey. Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. So I want to read a quote from Nebraska Public Media in January 2024 that was talking about business owners' reactions to the minimum wage increases. And one of the people quoted in the article is a friend and neighbor and small business owner in my district. I think his-- he

lived around the corner, but I think his business is technically in Senator Dungan's district just across the way. And he'd owned a small business with locations in Lincoln and Omaha for over 30 years. Dave Titterton talked about how he had already paid over 80% of em-- his employees at least \$15 an hour and how the cost of material-- so the, the minimum wage wasn't really a factor for him-- but that the cost of materials for inventory was a much bigger factor in price increases than minimum wages. And he thought that that is really what was driving the challenges in their small businesses, not having the decency to pay employees a decent wage. He also recognized that higher wages are reinvested into small businesses in the community. Tho-- quote, those employees that we pay those wages to, they're going out, they're buying gas, they're going to the grocery store, they're paying for housing, and they've got money so that they can go shopping. There was similar feedback from small business owners in Hastings who talked about how increases in the minimum wage were really important for her business and her employees. And the business owner from Hastings talked about how important it is to have an empowered population with access to a living wage, which is better for our economy than a short-sighted perspective. And these are the same general argan-- arguments not only for a vibrant business community but for economic justice. When people have an opportunity to have the dignity of a hard day's work honored and lessen their reliance on public assistance-- which allegedly is all of our goals, right? Save the taxpayer money. Get people off of work support programs. Get them into the workforce. Having access to meaningful benefits and fair pay for fair work helps to lessen reliance on public assistance. It helps to ensure that our local business community has dollars in the workforce reinvested. It helps to save small businesses money by reducing retention and recruitment and training issues, by increasing productivity and morale. These are positive things. There are also small business owners from my district who talked about how important it was to pay at least, if not more, minimum wage during the course of the campaign. And they came forward to testify and speak out in the media. And hundreds, hundreds and hundreds of Nebraska small businesses lent their support to this campaign. Another quote from a business owner, small business owner in my district, Julie Sondrup, said, quote, people can't make ends meet on just \$9 an hour. A minimum wage that is that low devalues workers' time on the job. That's why we pay more and employees know that we value their work and time. Properly compensating employees leads to happier employees and a better customer service environment. Happier customers spend more money. Those are the voices of small business owners in Nebraska who do the right thing, that don't petition their government to undercut low-wage

workers, that pay good benefits, that pay goo-- that pay good wages, that provide good benefits, because it makes good business sense. And again, Senator Raybould and others may have checked no at the ballot box when they had an opportunity to vote on this measure, or Senator Clouse or Senator Meyer or Senator Strommen or Senator Hallstrom, but other voters picked yes. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Conrad. Senator John Cavanaugh-- excuse me. A announcement from the Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Thank you, Mr. President. Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee will hold an executive session at 10:45 under the south balcony. Banking Committee at 10:45 under the south balcony. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks for the update, Mr. Clerk. Good morning again, colleagues. I stand in support of the motion to reconsider, in support of the, the motion to indefinitely postpone, opposed to LB258. And appreciate the discussion this morning. I think Senator Conrad hit on some interesting points. We've got some, like, a lot of handouts here that there's some conversation about the economic wisdom or whatever the, you know, the, the intellectual arguments for why minimum wage exists or what intention it's supposed to serve. And I think Senator Conrad hit on some of the arguments there in this, this speech and her last one about the, the argument for why minimum wage should exist and what purpose it serves. And Senator Raybould has been talking about the problems with minimum wage. And I, I appreciate both sides of that conversation. I think it's interesting. I think its ac-- academic at this point. Right? We're having a conversation-- the voters voted for this. The voters had an intention to serve the purpose. And I would tell you that the voters' intention is more in line with what Senator Conrad's talking about than what Senator Raybould's talking about. And I think that the conversation here is not whether or not, you know, somebody should get a, a Nobel Prize in economics for determining what the right minimum wage is or what the right adjustment should be. That's not what we're here to solve. We're not here to make that determination. We're here to respect the will of the voters and make a determination about what's right for the people of Nebraska. And I think that there are legitimate points about inflation and, you know, big contributions to inflation and big contributions to the cost of things, say, on our grocery shelves have to do with increasing costs at the commercial

level, meaning that the producers at the manufacturers or companies that make the products are charging more for the products because they can get away with charging more for the products. You know, there's all this conversation about shrinkflation. You know, making the Snickers bar smaller. So you think you're paying the same amount for a smaller Snickers bar. And I have a story about a smaller bag of popcorn with my kids, and it was very upsetting to discover that the bag of popcorn was smaller than we had thought it was going to be because-- I have four kids and sharing is difficult and-- but shrinkflation is a real thing, and part of that has to do with driving up profits. So if we're going to talk about where, like-- if you want to get into the nitty-gritty of, like, where are we cutting corners on hiring people, where are we cutting to the increase in the cost of the overall services-- I mean, part of that conversation of course includes the massive disparity in wealth of the executive level versus the workers. It has to do with the massive profits of the businesses versus the people who work for those businesses. And that is a conversation that I think is totally legitimate. I don't think that's this conversation. This conversation is about the voters voted for minimum wage and they voted for a inflation-adjusted increase every year. That's what the voters voted for. And I think the proposal of a 1.5% cap on the increase is fundamentally different than what the voters voted for because the voters were intentional about getting in-- minimum wage to keep pace with inflation. And by putting this artificial cap on it at 1.5%, it will not keep up with inflation. It will continue to be eroded over time. And the voters will, will be undermined and disrespected. So if people want to have a conversation about, you know, good-- what, what should be a conversation for the economics classrooms and universities, they can do that. But that is not about what the voters wanted. So what I actually pushed my light to talk about was I thought-- we've had a lot of conversations about what minimum wage has been over the years. So Senator Conrad pointed out 1938 was the first minimum wage of \$0.25. '39 went up to \$0.30. '40 went up to 4-- '45 went up to \$0.40. '50 went up to \$0.75. 1956 went up to \$1. 1961, \$1.15. So I think that may be around when Senator Holdcroft was working. 1963, \$1.25. '67, \$1.40. '68, \$1.60. 1970, \$2. 1975, \$2.10. '76, \$2.30. '78, \$2.65. '79, \$2.90. '80, \$3.10. '81, \$3.35. '90, \$3.80. '91, \$4.25. '96, \$4.75. '97, \$5.15. So one of the traits there is it was going up pretty regularly through statutory change for a long time. But then we've stagnated. Since '97, it was \$5.15. 2007, \$5.85. 2008, \$6.55. 2009, \$7.25, and hasn't gone up since then. So federal minimum wage hasn't gotten up in more than a decade. The people of Nebraska since 2009 have stepped in twice to--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

J. CAVANAUGH: --increase minimum wage, and they would like it to continue to go up proportionate to inflation. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator DeKay would like to recognize some guests in the north balcony: 21 fourth graders from Plainview Elementary in Plainview, Nebraska. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, I rise again in favor of the reconsider motion and in favor of the IPP and then opposed to the underlying bill. Just as a brief aside, colleagues, I want to be very clear: the motions that are on the board are real motions, as we've talked about before. And the motion to reconsider, if approved, would allow you to vote again on the IPP motion. And I think sometimes people see these things on the board and don't fully comprehend or at least understand. If you vote to IPP this, it is postponed and we move on to the next bill. So if you are opposed to Senator Raybould's LB258, you can vote green on the IPP. You can vote yes on the indefinitely postpone motion. And that would accomplish the goal that I think some of you have with regards to opposing Senator Raybould's bill. So I know that oftentimes we see these on the board and people don't, I, I, I think, maybe take them as serious motions, but they are serious motions. And you are permitted to take a vote on that if you want to based on how you feel. With that being said, I want to continue a little bit of the conversation that I had earlier with regards to purchasing power. And I think when we see numbers-- what I was getting at earlier is when you see numbers on a page and, you know, we see this \$15 an hour, \$13, \$14, \$15, compared to what the minimum wage used to be-- to some of my colleagues, that stands out. And they think to themselves, oh, that's so much higher than what it used to be when I, when I got paid, or, that's much higher when I worked minimum wage. But the reality is, as we've talked about, prices of things are going up astronomically. And this isn't just a recent factor. Yes, certainly post-pandemic we've seen prices skyrocket. And there's a number of factors that go into that. But even prior to 2020, over the decades prior to 2020, we have seen a rise in the cost of just general day-to-day living and a rise in cost of attaining things that many consider to be part of, you know, the, the American dream of being a, a family with a house and kids and all that business. But it outpaces inflation. When you talk about the cost of homes, for example, homes have gone up astronomically, far outpaced general

inflation. Cost of groceries has gone up astronomically. I pulled up this chart, which I thought was interesting, with regards to the purchasing power of the U.S. dollar. And it goes through from 1913 all the way through to today. And it talks about what \$1 would buy at that point in time. In 1913, for example, \$1 would have bought you 30 Hershey bars. \$1 in 1929 would have brought you 10 rolls of toilet paper. \$1 in 1933, 10 bottles of beer. \$1 in 1944, 20 bottles of Coca-Cola. \$1 in 1953, 10 bags of pretzels. \$1 In 1964, a drive-in movie ticket. \$1 in 1971 gets you 17 oranges. \$1 in 1987 only gets you two boxes of crayons. And fast forward to 2008, \$1 only gets you two lemons. And as of 2020, when this chart stopped, \$1 could maybe in some places get you one cup of coffee. So when we're seeing the numbers on paper, I just want to remind my colleagues that things are more expensive. And that sounds basic. I know that sounds really obvious to say because everybody's feeling the, the, the, the wallet pain right now. People are trying to tighten their belts. But this has been a long progression over time. And when you talk about-- you know, I'm, I'm 36. When you talked about my parents' generation or the parents-- their parents and how-- I don't want to say easy, but more obtainable was to do things like buy a home or to work for a summer and then pay your college tuition. I mean, those were things that were actually obtainable. Nowadays, things are just so astronomically expensive that these things that most consider basic tenets of living a successful life are just out of reach. So what we're talking about by increasing this minimum wage is getting just a little bit closer to a living wage. And let me be clear: the minimum wage is still not a living wage. People still struggle. And if they have dependents, it is still very difficult. But I want to encourage my colleagues to think about how those things have changed over time, that it is not 1995 anymore, that it is not that easy to go out and buy groceries. And we've seen the cost of groceries go up over the last five, even six, seven years. And some of that's supply chain issues. And some of that certainly is due to the pandemic. But a number of other things are due to large corporations trying to ensure profitability and trying to make sure that they continue to increase profits. And who that really hurts is the everyday working person who's just trying to go get food for their family. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Dungan. Senator McKinney, you're recognized to speak.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Mr. President. I'm rising in supported of the motion to reconsider the motion to IPP this bill. And Senator Raybould, I did read those articles. And after reading them, I come-- I, I-- I've come to the conclusion that whoever wrote those articles

reached the conclusion that paying people nonlivable wages is acceptable. That's the conclusion I came to. And, and that's very troubling, you know? As Senator Dungan just mentioned, the cost of living is going up. Housing is unaffordable for most people, and it's getting unaffordable by the day. And that's a issue that we should be addressing here. But we're discussing taking away the will of the voters, you know, making changes to the minimum wage because wealthy people want more profits, essentially. And they might not hire a 14- or 15-year-old because they don't want to pay them \$15 an hour. It is what it is. But I'm almost sure-- and I would bet-- I, I would bet on this-- and I don't even bet. I don't gamble-- but I would be on this that McDonald's would still hire them. I, I would bet that these 14- and 15-year-olds would still find a job. If you don't want to hire them, just say that. Like, seriously. The cost of living is going up. Food is going up. We have a president changing tariffs by the day. I went to the grocery store the other day, and I was like, wow. This is crazy. Like, I got, like, five things, and it almost cost \$100. I was like, wow. This is wild. Imagine that for somebody that is not like-- well, I'm not making a lot of money. But seriously, just imagine that for somebody that's just struggling, literally struggling. And imagine that for a young person who is struggling, going to school, trying to take care of his or her family, and we're trying to limit their, their-- how much they can make. And I'm just-- really, I'm struggling trying to comprehend it in my head. That's why I'm struggling with my words. Because it, it, it makes no sense to me that we run for office and tell people to vote for us and we're going to fight for them and we're going to stand up for them and we're going to do right by them. Then we get in this place and we do everything against them. That is the theme of this session: working against the people that voted for us. Because Senator Raybould, 75% of your district voted for this bill. Well, no, voted for the increase in the minimum wage. And my, my colleagues that are on the fence about this bill, I just want you to know that if you vote for cloture, that is pretty much voting yes. This bill should die on General File. It shouldn't die on Final Reading. If you voted for a cloture, that is voting yes. All it needs is 25 votes to advance. Don't vote for cloture. Let the bill die. We don't have to have this discussion anymore. And the youth in our communities don't have to worry about being limited as far as their earning potential that this bill is presenting towards them. This is crazy. And those articles is just saying, hey, we shouldn't pay people that are 14 and 15 or even 12 some type of wage because we wanna make better profits. That's what I read. Maybe I'm wrong, but that's what read, that rich people wanna make money. And if they don't need-- and they don't want to hire young people at the expense of it because they

want to make more money. That's crazy. But we care about people. And that's the theme of this session, is, working against the people of Nebraska. And that is sad. It started with the Uber bill, and it's continuing. Then it continued with the paid sick leave bill. And is-- and it's on to this bill. This is just wrong.

KELLY: That's your time, Senator. Thank you, Senator McKinney. Senator Hansen, you're recognized to speak.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. I'm just going to maybe propose a, a different narrative to minimum wage. I know the-- this is not so much-- I think, I think the context matters when it comes to minimum wage. I know we're not discussing the fact that we're gonna be at \$15 an hour. I think one of the things we're discussing with this bill is the idea of how much over the course of time the minimum wage will increase. How does that affect labor? How does that affect employees and employers? How does that affect the free market? Et cetera. And so over the course of the next few times of me getting up here speaking, I would like to address some of these things. So if people want to yield me time, feel more than welcome. I'll do my best to kind of answer any questions or at least kind of provide a counterpoint to what we're hearing from those who are in opposition to LB258. So one of my goals here, I think, is to challenge kind of a widely accepted belief that minimum wage laws help workers and reduce poverty. One of the things that we've heard quite often on the floor is the idea that this is for the people, we're-- for-- they're going to get more jobs or it's economic development or-- you know, we've heard all kinds of stuff so far. While the idea of setting a wage floor to protect low-income workers sounds compassionate, in practice it has serious unintended consequences. Some of you have maybe heard me say the phrase, good legislation-- or-- what-- no. Good intentions lead to bad legislation. This is a prime example of that phrase. Drawing from economic research and the insights of renowned economists, minimum wage laws lead to job losses, hurt the most vulnerable workers, increase the cost of good and services, and fail to address the real causes of poverty. One of the most significant effects of raising the minimum wage is job loss. When the government mandates a high-- a wage higher than what the market naturally sets, businesses must adjust. I think a lot of us understand that. When we increase wages, the owner of that business then has to make a decision. They can't simply absorb the extra costs. Many of them can't. So when you talk about-- I think Senator Raybould did, some other senators on here who are even a fa-- in favor or against it, talk about many of these businesses will be hurt and a lot of them are on shoestring budgets. But it's for the greater good. So they reduce hiring, they cut costs, they replace

workers with automation, and even shut down entirely. I think-- it might have been Senator Conrad who brought up the idea of this feels like-- which I, which I appreciated-- the idea this feels like a Charles Dickens novel. And so the idea-- maybe what some people have who are in opposition to this bill think business owners are greedy and they're like Scrooge hoarding their money and not gonna give it out at all. And I think that's-- especially when it comes to small businesses, that's further from the truth. Who this harms the most. One of my favorite Nobel Prize winning economists-- who I've quoted many times on here-- Milton Friedman, called the minimum wage, quote, a law that makes it illegal for a person whose skills are not worth a certain amount to work. In other words, if someone's labor is worth \$8 an hour but the minimum wage is \$15, that person is priced out of the job. Senator Guereca got up here-- I don't see him on the floor. I was hoping to ask him a question if he ever gets back on the floor here. He, he, he used an example of going to buy a cup of coffee this morning. And the cup of coffee was \$9, which seems high to me. And so, why is it \$9? It's bills-- of course, it's a ballot initiative. It's measures such as this, especially when we increase the minimum wage that we have above \$15 an hour, that will only increase the cost of that coffee. And now you have two people who work at Scooters or Starbucks, wherever you bought the coffee from. You're sitting next to those two workers who are right there serving you that drink, sitting next to them at church. Now you have to make the decision-- if you're all in favor of increasing minimum wage to whatever extent-- you now have to the decision when you sit next to two people at church who both make \$13 an hour which one you get to choose to fire. Because now you have to pay one \$15 an hour. And many small business owners cannot afford to pay both those \$15 an hour or \$16, \$17, \$18 an hour as, as, as this increases per inflation. This is economics 101.

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hansen. Senator Fredrickson, you're recognized to speak.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, Nebraskans. I want to-- actually-- and I can't get, like, a Dickens novel out of my head now, so thank you for-- Senator Conrad and Senator Hansen for bringing both of those up. I wanna point out a couple of things today. So there-- there's been a lot of discussion in here during this debate but also throughout this entire week about ballot initiatives and referendums, et cetera, et cetera. And I want

to just underscore something for the members. You know, I think we need to ask ourselves, why have we seen such an increase in ballot initiatives and why have we seen such an increase in referendums, part-- and specifically ballot initiatives and referendums that have resulted in, in, frankly, landslide results. And this is a direct result of a legislative branch that has been deeply out of touch with the citizenry of the state. And the citizenry of the state will pursue a ballot initiative or a referendum when they feel as though the legislative branch is not representing their desire, their goals, and their wants. And so to have these things happen and then to have us come back here and try to chip away at these referendums and initiatives I think is pretty rich because the ballot initiatives themselves have spoken pretty clearly. And again, these are not 49% to 51% votes. These are pretty much landslide decisions that the people are making here. And the people have been really clear on where they stand on these issues, whether that's minimum wage, whether that's paid sick leaves, whether that's vouchers for, for private education. And the Legislature has refused to act in alignment with where the people have stood on these things. I want to pivot a little bit as well because I've been having conversations with a number of members about this bill, and, and people have been doing vote cards, et cetera. And I think this is especially important to have a discussion about for new members who might be not fully familiar with how the cloture process works in here. So my understanding is, based on conversations I've had directly with almost every member in here-- I think I haven't spoken with three members-- my understanding is that this, this vote does not-- this bill does not have 33 votes. It's actually not just one or two shy. It's-- there's, there's a few votes shy of 33. And so I've been told by multiple members that this is not going to pass, but I've heard things like, but I am gonna vote for cloture because I wanna ensure that debate ceases. So it's important to realize that after a cloture vote, whether cloture gets 33 or 32 or 30, debate ceases no matter what. No matter how you vote on cloture, debate on the bill will cease. The question we have to ask ourselves with limited time left if this bill does not in fact have 33 votes and folks are saying this is not going to pass on Final Read because it needs 33 votes to pass, we need to ask ourselves whether or not, if that is the end game, do we want to spend another four hours on this on Select, another two hours of this on Final? That's another six hours of debate time, and we have very limited time left in this session, as the Speaker has pointed out, on a bill that we're all acknowledging and saying does not have the 33 votes it needs to pass. And that's a disservice to the citizens of the state. Because they're relying on us to get to work in here. They want us to work on things like property

taxes, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So we can continue to debate this, whether it's-- I don't know what the function of it would be if in fact everyone's being honest about how they're gonna vote on this bill, which I believe they are. I have no reason to think people aren't being honest with me. Why continue this? So for new members, voting yes on cloture-- the question always is for debate to cease. And it's tempting to vote yes on that per se because that means, yes, I want debate to cease. But even if you vote no, and if the nos prevail on cloture, debate still does cease. We do not continue to discuss the bill after a cloture vote, regardless of whether or not invoking cloture was successful. So I hope that clarifies things for folks. And I hope if the intention really is not to vote for the actual bill but to vote for cloture, we consider-- we really take in-- the time to consider the amount of additional hours that will be spent discussing this to no avail, given that, if it does not in fact have the 33 votes, it will not pass Final Read. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Fredrickson. Senator Kauth would like to recognize some guests in the north balcony: 68 fourth graders from Neihardt Elementary in Omaha. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Senator Hallstrom would like to recognize a guest under the north balcony: his son, Grant. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Returning to the queue. Senator Quick, you're recognized to speak.

QUICK: Thank you, Mr. President. And I rise in support of the motion to reconsider. And, you know, we-- we've talked a lot this morning about the fact that the voters had, had voted for sick leave as well as a, a, a ballot initiative to also pass a-- for a, a minimum wage increase. When I served before from-- I started in 2017 and served through 2021. In 2019, I actually brought a bill to increase the minimum wage, which was similar to what the ballot initiative did. I felt like it was important that we-- to increase those-- that minimum wage. We'd saw for a, a number of years how that had, had not kept, kept up with inflation, how it affected working families. I can remember-- the bi-- the bill actually was brought to committee. We weren't able to get it out of committee, so it stayed in committee for those last two years I was in there. But I think it was something that we had definitely talked about, I talked about with other senators at the time, trying to garner support for that and, and get that passed into legislation on the floor. I recognize that there are barriers for families. And the, the wage at that time was \$7.25 minimum wage. That was definitely not enough. With the ballot initiative, it went to \$9, and then increased incrementally over time. I felt like maybe at some point the federal government would step in and possibly do something

for working families across the country, but to, to no avail. That was-- that has not come to fruition, and so the states have taken upon themselves to, to try to help people in their, in their, in their communities across their states to make sure these working families can provide for themselves. I know this minimum wage that-- what Senator Raybould has-- is affects teenagers and younger workers in our state. I-- like I had mentioned before, we still have many of these juv-- or, youth that are, that are working to help, help their families out, to help provide that income that will, that will help the prevam-- the family be able to, to pay all the bills and to keep, to keep a house or keep their apartment. And-- so I think it's important that we maintain what we have for-- what the voters voted for. And I also want to mention that inflation-- you know, with the inflation, that minimum wage-- as, as inflation goes up, the, the buying power of those dollars is not-- it-- it's not enough, you know? So I think it's important that we keep, keep that, that incremental growth going for those families. And then I look at what we do in this Legislature sometimes. So we're, we're looking at maybe decreasing what we're going to do for-- on minimum wage, but yet we maybe will put more barriers up for families on receiving SNAP benefits or TANF dollars or, or areas like that. So we have families who, who have child care-- who need child care for their, for their children, and we want to make sure that that's there for them. I can tell you in Grand Island we have a child care shortage. And it's, it's-- at this point, it's, it's, it's, it's becoming more, more important for me to make sure that we're going to make sure that, that families have access to child care so they can go to work, so they provide for their families. And so I, I look at all these issues that we're facing today, and I would-- I, I, I think we should keep the minimum wage increase going up. And with that, I'll yield the rest of my time. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Quick. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Inflation, Senator Hansen. I think that was the word you were looking for. The cost of coffee and goods have gone up because of inflation, not because of minimum wage. If it was because of a minimum wage going up in Nebraska, then the cost wouldn't be going up across the entire country. So inflation and I believe tariffs are also a contributing factor to our rising costs of goods and services across the country. I, I, I regret not purchasing a car prior to the most recent tariffs that I think start today-- maybe they start tomorrow-- because my cars are ho-- hobbling along. But, you know, I'll make do until they're dead. So I've been

looking at the eligibility. So Senator Quick has a bill for SNAP eligibility, and it removes the sunset for SNAP eligibility because we keep putting a sunset on the 165% of poverty. And Senator John Cavanaugh-- or, as Senator DeKay called him yesterday, Senator Brother-- he prioritized that bill. So looking at this and looking at minimum wage and currently-- well, if a person makes-- let's see here. Let's just do this math really quick. So let's assume that a person is working 40 hours a week. That's, you know, normal amount. So they're working 40 hours a week at \$13.50 an hour. Oops. 40 times-- and that is \$540 a week. And let's just take that times 52 weeks and then divide that. That's \$28,000. Divide that by 12 so we get the monthly. So that means that you are working-- you are getting paid \$2,340. That's if you make the current minimum wage. A family of two would qualify for SNAP. So that's a parent and a child, basically. And for those that want to add work requirements to these things like SNAP and child care and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, well, you'd have to work to make \$23,000 a month. So currently, a single parent getting \$13.50 an hour qualifies for SNAP, which costs the taxpayers money. So instead of requiring employers to pay a livable wage, we are squabbling over a minimum wage and talking about how it's in-- impacting the economy. And then you all are fighting about making sure that these people can afford to feed their children and can afford to go to work. And there's these complaints that, well, the employer should be taking care of it. Well, they're not. So we have to. So if you really think that employers should be taking care of child care and you really think that employers should be taking care of living wages, then stop haggling over the minimum wage. Let's start talking about actual sustained policy that will decrease the need and utilization of programs like SNAP and child care subsidies. But so long as you are going to fight for minimum wage to be as low as possible and then also fight against giving people access to food and housing and resources, I got no use for you. I'm here for the people of Nebraska. I'm here to fight for them. And I am here to hold ourselves accountable for when we are harming Nebraska and children. And this minimum wage, it ain't nothing. It's not good enough. It's beyond below a baseline. A livable wage is something like \$20 an hour. And we're squabbling over a minimum wage. I'd like to move on to the next thing. I'd like to talk about Senator Quick's bill. I'd like to talk about Senator DeKay's bill. I'd like to talk Senator Spivey's bill that got IPPed in committee because apparently all we can do is hurt poor people and make it a continual systemic problem that we have manufactured that we refuse to help them with. We don't stand for the working people in this Legislature. We stand for the rich and for the profit lines. And I just can't stand for that.

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator Raybould, you're recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. I just want to reiterate my respect for the voices of our young people. I value their work. We value their labor. We value their contribution. We value their energy. But I do have to remind my colleagues that right now, our minimum wage is the 18th highest in the United States. It's right in line with what is-- the minimum wages are on the East Coast and the West Coast, where we all know the cost of living is the highest. Again, fellow Nebraskans listening to this, Nebraska ranks as the 10th lowest in terms of the cost of living. Again, I wanna reiterate, if you are 14 and 15 and no one hires you, there's no way you can help your family members. And just with 14 and 15-year-olds, the reason why it's set at \$13.50, if they get hired, there's tremendous amount of limitations. It's on one of the handouts that I provided. There's a whole list of OSHA re-- regulations and guidelines. I'm grateful that Senator McKinney read the report on at-risk youth, the impact of a \$12 and \$15 minimum wage on teen employment, because it goes on to say in the findings that over an 18-year period, from 2000 to 2018, the share of employed 16- to 19-year-olds fell. His findings are supported by another study conducted by Dr. Charlene Kalenoski [SIC] of Texas Tech and found minimum wage increases reduced youth employment, correlating with a reduced lifetime income due to fewer on-the-job training opportunities for young people. The trend in declining teenage employment has been examined by numerous economists, researchers, and professors. Their conclusions have been near unanimous: minimum wage increases have disproportionately affected teen employment. So they talk about every 10% increase in the minimum wage led to a decrease in employment growth for teenagers by 2.27% over a three-year period. And they also registered that there were certain reasons. A lot of young people are involved in youth sports and have other activities that take them away from having a job opportunity. While the economists found all three were contributing factors, they concluded that rising minimum wage floors have been the main driving force pricing teens out of the labor market. My colleagues, I ask you to please kindly review the training wage. It'll be 90% for 90 days of the state of Nebraska minimum wage. So I hope that you will consider that this is a practical measure, a well-intended measure, not to deny our young people adequate wages but to de-- to allow them an opportunity to have a wonderful job, a training job where they learn and grow and develop

and go on to other work opportunities. I'd like to yield the rest of my time to Senator Hansen if I may.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator Hansen, 1 minute, 55 seconds.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Raybould. I got-- continue on a little bit about what I was discussing. And I think Senator Re-- Raybould even touched on this about the, the idea of the loss of jobs for teenagers. But actually, it's much more specific than that. We're actually talking about those lower income teenagers and those in minority communities are specifically hardest hit when it comes to increasing the minimum wage. Now, now-- this is just not a theory. Research backs this up. A 2019 study from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that increases in the minimum wage lead to declines in employment, especially among low-skilled workers. A 2017 University of Washington study on Seattle's \$15 minimum wage found that while some workers earned higher wages, their total earnings actually decreased because they worked fewer hours. Good intentions can sometimes lead to bad legislation. The impact is particularly devastating for young and minority workers. Another one of my favorite economists, Thomas Sowell, has pointed out that before minimum wage laws became widespread, black teen unemployment was lower than white teen unemployment. I believe this was back in 1940s. But when the minimum wage rose-- I think they dramatically increased it, I think, back in 1950-- black teen unemployment soared because they were often the first to be let go. Milton Friedman also again-- I'm going to quote him again-- famously called the minimum wage, quote, one of the most anti-black laws on the books because it eliminates entry-level jobs that are critical for gaining experience and climbing the economic ladder. And in, in relation to this-- I was hoping Senator Guereca would be ab-- be able to answer a question if he could, please.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, would you yield to a question?

GUERECA: Yes.

HANSEN: Thank you. I think more for clarity's sake, you mentioned yesterday that, with your statistics, this bill would affect-- what was it-- about 1,100, 1,200 people in the state of Nebraska?

GUERECA: So that was folks that make the minimum wage.

KELLY: That's time, senators.

HANSEN: Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hansen and Senator Guereca. Senator Kauth, you're recognized to speak.

KAUTH: Thank you, Mr. President. I was not originally in favor of this bill when it had 17 as the cutoff for the youth wage, mostly because I agree that kids should be paid for doing the same job that other people are doing. However, when they dropped it down to the 14- and 15-year-olds and I understood the reason why, is because the federal government says 14- and 15-year-olds are not allowed to do every part of a job. I have three sons. Two of them worked in a grocery store. And they are very big and strong. And they would not be allowed to climb up on a stepladder. They couldn't use a box cutter. They had to ask some of their fellow coworkers-- some of whom were older women-- to pick up boxes for them because they were not allowed to do the full job. If you're not allowed by the federal government to do the full job, you should not get the full wage. This bill actually raises the training wage. So right now-- and this is something else I didn't know until Senator Raybould pointed it out-- the training wage, which is that first 90 days, is 75% of the federal minimum. That's \$5.40 an hour that businesses legally are obligated to pay someone. This bill raises it up to \$13.50 for those 90 days. I think that's a significant increase. And so you're protecting people very, very much with this. And this bill also slows down the, the increases. We don't want to be in ten years having to pay \$30 an hour for minimum wage because there's wage inflation. So it's not just inflation-inflation, it's wage inflation. When the lowest person on the totem who can do the least or who has the-- has been the last person in-- pardon me-- is paid \$30 an hour, everyone else who's been there is gonna say, hey, I need to get paid more too. You're increasing all of the wages. What's happening when you increase the minimum wage, you're not actually changing anything about the worker. You're not asking for more responsibility. You're not getting more skills. You're not doing anything individually to improve your standing and to improve your ability to raise money. What you're saying is, I want the federal government or I want state government to step in and tell a business what I'm worth. We need to be able to have our businesses pay people what they can and what they're worth. We're in a very competitive business environment. Businesses know that they have to compete to get good workers. So that's where I'm at on the bill. And I'd like to yield my time to Senator Hansen if he would like it.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Kauth. Senator Hansen, 2 minutes, 15 seconds.

HANSEN: All right. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Kauth. I was hoping Senator Guereca would continue to yield to a question that I was gonna ask before.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, would you yield?

GUERECA: Yes, Mr. President.

HANSEN: Yep. And so back to that original question that I was gonna ask is, out of those 1,100, 1,200 people that you say we're gonna affect people in Nebraska, how many of those were under the age of 26?

GUERECA: So I did a little digging since you came up and asked me in the last few minutes. Oh, gosh. Where'd it go? Oh, give me a sec. Of course it disappeared. I believe the number was around 20-- so the statistic I found was workers 16 to 24 represented around 20% of the total workforce but around 44% of those earning the minimum wage.

HANSEN: OK. Thank you. I think one of the main arguments you had previously was the idea that we need to give these people a living wage. And so we're talking about people between the age of 14 and 24. And according to the federal government and many people also here in Nebraska, the whole idea that people could be on their parents' insurance until 26 lends credence to the idea that we don't believe they should be able to support themselves until they're 26. And so the idea to give them a living wage, being able to support-- I think we heard on the floor-- maybe from Senator Guereca and others-- that they need to support a family and a home. And so the idea we're talking about, even 14-, 15-, 16- to 20-year-olds being able to support a family and a home-- and that's why we have to continue increasing the minimum wage or increase this much-- doesn't seem like a reasonable solution to helping some of these young individuals. Instead, raising the minimum wage actually gives them the option to have less jobs and actually affects then somebody's ability to have a job or not. And that was kind of going back to what I said before, and I think Senator Raybould touched on that too, is that idea of those-- especially younger or in min-- minority groups, this is-- thi-- these-- this is a discriminatory-- discriminatory law that affects them the most. I know we're looking to help people, but it hurts them the most. Another unintended consequence of the minimum wage is the acceleration of automation. When labor becomes too expensive, businesses turn to technology. We're seeing this right now. How many of you go to Walmart and there's only one checkout person there? How many go to McDonald's and there's nobody there to take your order anymore? Now they're all going to AI.

KELLY: That's your time, senators.

HANSEN: Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hansen and Guereca. Senator Hallstrom, you're recognized to speak.

HALLSTROM: Thank you, Mr. President, members. Small businesses are the economic engine of the country and the glue that holds communities together. They employ nearly half of the private sector workforce and account for half of the country's gross domestic product. Increases in the minimum wage, even in small increments over time as provided by the voter initiative, make it even harder for small businesses to compete and survive. Small firms tend to employ a greater percentage of workers who are more likely to be in the minimum wage population. Think of those who are young, lack experience, or have weaker educational credentials. Many firms have employees who are directly affected by an increase in minimum wage. Increasing the cost of workers in marginally profitable firms can serve to price some workers right out of a job or result in a reduction in hours worked for the employee. While increases in the minimum wage may therefore give some individuals a higher hourly rate, if they have reduced hours at the end of the day, their net may be a loss. In instances where the legal hourly wage is higher than would have occurred pursuant to free market forces, the minimum wage law effectively requires employers to pay some employees a wage which exceeds their productivity. In these cases, employers will predictably make adjustments in their use of labor. Such adjustments will produce gains, as I've indicated, for some workers at the expense of others. Those workers who keep their jobs and receive higher wages clearly gain. The losers are those workers who may be disadvantaged in terms of marketable skills who may, may lose their jobs or see a reduction in hours and those who will not be hired in the first place. This is not the first time that this type of legislation has been introduced. LB15 from a number of years ago, during the committee hearing, one of the opponents suggested, do you think teenagers would rather have a \$10 an hour job or a \$15 an hour a job? The answer to that question is obvious, but it's the wrong question. The proper question is, would you rather have a \$10 an hour job or no job at all? Therein lies the rub. While the voters have spoken and have established the price at which a labor transaction may occur, they cannot mandate that the transaction will ultimately be made. Increases in the minimum wage do not result in corresponding increases in worker productivity, and therefore jobs are placed at risk with increases in the minimum wage. The increased minimum wage forces employers to make tough choices. Small business

owners will either have to increase the cost of their product or service-- which is not always feasible-- or reduce labor cost. Any reduction in labor cost would result in reducing jobs, reducing hours, or reducing benefits, none of which accrue to the benefit of the employee. To soften the blow and reduce the likelihood of employees-- employers cutting jobs in response to the hike in the minimum wage, LB258 provides lower cost options for employers who employ younger workers who, in many cases, are entering the workforce for the first time. The reduced cost associated with the proposed youth wage will enhance the willingness of small business owners to retain jobs for those in the next generation of our workforce. As Senator Kauth indicated, this bill does have a balance in terms of increasing the youth training wage. We've had a lot of discussion on the mic over the paid sick leave measure as well the minimum wage measure in terms of not undoing the will of the people. That cuts both ways, as I've indicated before. If we can't mitigate or reduce some of the effects of the minimum wage or the paid sick leave law that was approved by the voters, then conversely for those that are opposing those measures, they ought to be the, the, the goose and the gander in terms of taking the medicine that you should not be able to increase them. But that's not what the law or the constitutional amendment allows. And LB258 in fact is providing a commensurate benefit in terms of the youth training wage. And with that, I would defer my remaining time to the chair.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hallstrom. Senator Lonowski, you're recognized to speak.

LONOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. President. I stand in favor of Senator Raybould's LB258. And I'd speak to the people of Nebraska: if you're working for minimum wage, you should not be buying \$9 coffee. That's called priorities. I can make a-- I can go to McDonald's for \$1.50 or I can make my own coffee at home. That's what I used to do when I was not making so much. If you're having to leave practices early, I can help you find a job. That's what I do with the wrestlers. I'd call a, a garbage man named Jeff, and he could get you a job there or at UPS. And he did that for a kid that's now still working. Any construction people that are paying you minimum wage, I would leave that job. But I guarantee they're paying at least \$20 an hour to young men that are-- and young women that are willing to work. I could call my friend, Brad, at Mary Lanning Hospital and he can get you job in several areas. What's my point? If someone's paying you-- employees, if someone's paying you minimum wage, you have choices to move on. There's several jobs out there. I wanna lea-- I wanna read a list of places that not only pay minimum wage, but they offer you tuition and

scholarships: Starbucks, College Achievement Plan; McDonald's, Archway to Opportunity; Chipotle, tuition reimbursement; Chick-fil-A, Tuition Reduction Network; Pizza Hut, Life Unboxed Education; Chili's, Best You Education; Marco's Pizza, tuition assistance; Papa John's, Taco Bell, KFC, Burger King, Dunkin' Donuts, White Castle-- all of those, rather than just paying minimum wage alone, offer something more. When I speak to the people, if you're an employee working for \$8 an hour, don't settle for that. You can ask for a raise or you can move on to better paying jobs. They're out there. None of the pages here are making minimum wage. So why are we trying to set a minimum on something that's not there? Employ-- excuse me. Employees, you can also go get a construction job. Go shingle a house. Men and women, join the National Guard. You don't have to go for minimum wage. And guess what? If the minimum wage employer cannot pay you, they will raise their rates. Employers, small business owners, you do not have to pay minimum wage. We're not forcing people to pay minimum wage. You're welcome to pay above that. You have the freedom to pay more than the minimum wage. Keep your employees employed. Keep government people out of your decisions. I support LB258. And I yield the remainder of my time to Senator Hansen.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Lonowski. Senator Hansen, 2 minutes and 1 second.

HANSEN: Man, right around the two-minute mark every time. This is great. Thank you, Senator Lonowski. And thank you, Mr. President. We just got handed a, a sheet here from the National Employment Law Project. I think Senator McKinney might have handed this out. I can't read the handwriting. Business, business for a fair minimum wage. One of the main things that they talk about on the first page here is a-- and this ties into one of the things I was just talking about-- and one of things it's gonna lead into, according to the Economic Policy Institute-- by the way, the Economic Policy Institute is a research institution funded, chaired, and promoted by labor unions and labor union supporters. It distributes research studies supporting the labor union agenda by promoting international trade restrictions, substantial increases in minimum wage, and claims that public sector union employees are underpaid. So a little bit of a bias here with this article, but they do claim that a \$15 minimum wage in Nebraska would benefit nearly 150,000 workers. On average, their annual earnings would increase by \$2,100. I don't dispute that. But here's the catch: according to the Congressional Budget Office, a 21-- 2021 study estimated that a \$15 minimum wage would lift 1.3 million people out of poverty, similar to what we're talking about here. It increases their standard of living, increases their pay. This is in America, by

the way, not Nebraska. But it also eliminates 1.4 million jobs. You get \$1.3 million of pay increase, but you're eliminating 1.4 million jobs. And that's not even talking about the decrease in hours that we'll see as well. Again, I don't-- I-- what I'm talking about here is about the minimum wage. We know that's what the ballot initiative was. That was the intent of the-- what the people voted for. I think we're-- I'm taking more in relation to the bill that we're-- that's on the board today and how much that's going to increase and how fast, which is what Senator Raybould is trying to put some kind of guardrails on so we don't destroy-- not even just the middle class, but the, the lower class when it comes to minimum wage, because that's exactly what this is gonna do.

KELLY: That's your time--

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: --Senator. Thank you, Senator Hansen. Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And a good-- again, good morning, colleagues. And I really appreciate this dialogue. I want to be clear in that poverty is caused by intentional systemic disinvestment. Like, minimum wage doesn't cause poverty. What people are navigating is not caused by creating safety nets. The safety net is due to the impacts of what we see around poverty. And the easiest way to pull someone out of poverty is money. So that is what TANF does with giving the lowest of our workers and people with income, giving them an opportunity. That's why you see more states doing universal income where they're giving them income to spend. And so I think we need to make sure that we're really aligning the data with the conversations and the, the actual frameworks around economic opportunity and prosperity, that poverty is not caused by safety net programs or not exasperated. They exist as a response to systemic disinvestment, which is the core root issue. And if we are going to use and conveniently use black economy, people of color, women, then we, then we need to have a real conversation. That means I expect this body to sit in, using the terms racial equity, which it cannot. There were people that did not sign my proclamation for Black History Month because they said that they do not believe in racial equity or inequalities at the system level. So you cannot say and use people like me and my community around why we have differences in economic opportunity for convenience for this argument which does not align. So I, I, I want to make sure that that's really clear. I have spent the last ten years of my career specifically deep into economic opportunity, workforce development.

How does that relate to public health and social drivers of health? And there's lots of frameworks that give us a roadmap on how we can do that. And every research document that you look at talks about having policies around paid FMLA, paid sick leave, having a minimum wage, addressing housing. Like, these are key components no matter what geography that you are in that will create a, a healthy, thriving community, economy, workforce-- name it-- families, and this body is actively working to erode those things. And LB258 with the carve-out is a, a part of that conversation of eroding not only the will of the second house but proven policies and frameworks around economic opportunity and prosperity. If you are willing to lock up babies at 11 years old, to change the age of detention for kids, you're saying that they can make decisions, that they are adults, then pay them as their adult counterparts. Do not carve out a minimum wage or a training wage that does not align, because they are taking care of their families. They are adding to the tax base and the economy. So those two truths cannot exist. There was lots of conversation around day cares especially and around what does it look like for folks not being able to operate their day care center because they have to pay this minimum wage. So I run a nonprofit that specifically built a business accelerator to support underserved business owners. We did a pilot in conjunction with the Early Childhood Center in Omaha to look at day care providers in a specific geographic location around what are they needing to be successful. So we provided technical assistance. We talked-- taught them about value proposition, understanding their market, their business model, what do they need to turn a revenue? And what came out of that was not that they were upset about minimum wage. They actually want to be able to pay their staff more because they know that you get what you pay for. If they are able to pay their folks a high enough wage where they can take care of themselves that they get a higher quality individual. But what came up was that they actually need the fees to be addressed that impact them growing and maintaining their business, that there are funding-- that there are funds being cut for grants at our state level around supporting day cares, that there is inadequate reimbursement through Title XX and other programs. So that is the issue why day cares are not surviving within the ecosystem. It's not because of minimum wage and the implications of minimum wage. They actually want to pay their staff more and provide benefits. This was a pilot that had 20 providers in it. And so, again, I want us to be cautious around making generalized statements because you had two-off conversations that this is the dominant narrative in our field or what people are saying around minimum wage and the carve-out, because I, I don't think it accurately

depicts the, the nuance and, and, and various differing opinions that need to be uplifted in this conversation.

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Spivey. Senator Moser, you're recognized to speak.

MOSER: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, Nebraskans. The Accountability and Disclosure Commission keeps track of money spent on political campaigns. You can look up and see how much every candidate was gifted and by whom, and then you can look and see what they spent it on. And then you, you can kind of look at how they act based on what you learned looking at the A&D reports. But much has been said during the discussion of this and then the previous discussion of LB415 about the will of the people. Well, this passed. It got 300,000 votes out of the 2 million people that live in Nebraska. 1.2 million, somewhere around there, are registered voters. Something like that. So it got 15% of the vote of all the people in the state. And if you look at the supporters of the ballot question, one of the biggest supporters spent over \$3 million in support of this ballot question. So-- you know, go back and look at the, the A&D reports. It's eye-opening, I think. And, you know, they, they, they talk about the will of the people. Well, if some outside companies from-- interest groups from D.C. hadn't spent \$3 million, we wouldn't even be talking about this. It's not organic. It was a campaign by outside forces. They spent \$3.6 million. They got 300,000 votes. They paid over \$10 a vote to get those votes. It's not some organic, grassroots mission of people who wanted to make more money. I-- in all of this, I've gotten less than a dozen emails supported or-- supportive or against this bill in my office from my constituents. And it-- so it's not something that's driving my constituents. But when you look at the \$3 million that was spent to support it, digital marketing, strategy, legal expenses, campaign counseling-- you know, it's no wonder-- I'm surprised they only got 300,000 votes after spending \$3.6 million. With that, I would give any time I have left to Senator Hansen if he'd like.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Moser. Senator Hansen, you have 2 minutes, 4 seconds.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Moser. I'm glad you brought up the idea of outside money coming into the state. A bill

that I introduced a couple years ago was hoping to kind of address that. And I think this should be a bi-- bipartisan concern, not just now but in the future, when we start seeing a lot of outside money coming from D.C., other areas of the country, trying to change how we live our lives in the state of Nebraska. I think that should be a concern for all of us, and so I'm glad that Senator Moser brought this up, which is a big part of the petition drive when it came to this ballot initiative. I'm glad that Senator Spivey brought up the idea of systemic disin-- disinvestment leading to poverty. I think she's right. I think di-- systemic disinvestment is both from outside the community and inside the community. I think one-- she's alluding to a lot, it seems like, from outside of the community what can the state do to help with systemic disinvestment or lack thereof. But it's also within the community. How do you invest into a community? Within your community? You create jobs. How do you create jobs? You don't pay them \$18, \$20 an hour to start off the-- right off the bat as a small business owner who cannot afford it. You create choices. A lack of entry-level jobs and a lack of choice drives systemic disinvestment within the community, in my opinion. And so I think-- also, I-- Senator Cavanaugh brought the idea of inflation was the word I was looking for. Not really, because inflation is made up of increased demand, rising production costs, which include labor costs. One of the largest production costs you can have as a small business owner is labor. And then changes in monetary and fiscal policy. So what we're talking about right here directly leads to inflation. I was on the-- I was on the topic of automation and the loss of entry-level jobs. Entry-level jobs are critical for developing skills--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

HANSEN: --gaining experience, and moving up the economic ladder. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hansen. Senator Rountree has some guests in the north balcony: Episcopalians here for Episcopal Advocacy Day. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak.

GUERECA: Thank you, Mr. President. It warms my heart to see such an appetite for meaningful campaign reform here in the state of Nebraska. So I think it's a conversation we can keep going into the future. I, I appreciate the line of questioning from Senator Hansen talking about, you know, youth up until the age of 26 stay on their parents' insurance. And absolutely. And that, you know, this training wage isn't meant to support a family. Well, I think the, the argument I was

making earlier this morning was that it's not always that wage earner having to take care of a child at home. So many times, not just in my district but in communities all over our great state, it's the child helping to supplement the household. That additional wage, as we've heard from several young people who have submitted testimony, sent in emails, many times that additional wage coming in from the child determines whether or not the internet bill gets paid, whether or not they have a meal that next morning, whether or not they're able to afford a new winter coat. So in that-- in those instances, it becomes a living wage. And that's what I want my colleagues to think about when they're casting their vote. Like I said, who, who are we hurting? It's not the family in west Omaha whose household income is six figures and the high schooler is earning a wage to, you know, buy whatever video game they want. It's the child in, in south Omaha, in North Platte, Scottsbluff whose family depends on that extra income to afford basic necessities. That's who I want you to consider, because that's who gets most affected. It's not the 17-year-old here in Lincoln who-- saving up for a trip. It's those folks that are working hard. This isn't a handout, folks. This is this Chamber saying that that 17-year-old's labor is worth less. There's always this concept of, gotta pool-- pull yourself up by the bootstraps. And I completely agree. The campaign promise that I ran on is that if you work hard, you deserve a shot at a good and decent life. If you work hard. And that's what we're talking about here. We're talking a deliberate devaluation of our fellow Nebraskans. Cutting the bootstraps. Sounds downright un-American to me, but that's just my opinion. Now, we might say, well, how often does it really-- does the, the, the additional income of the child affect the family? Well, in Nebra-- in, in Omaha, a two-bedroom apartment over the last five years has gone up over 13% in rent. I could be wrong, but I don't think salaries have increased at such rate. And that's just rent. For some of our fellow Nebraskans, life is hard. So what I ask of you, colleagues, is, don't cut the bootstrap for those that so desperately need just a little bit of help. Because for thousands of our citizens--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

GUERECA: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Guereca. Senator Ballard, you're recognized to speak.

BALLARD: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of LB5-- LB258 and in opposition to the IPP motion. I'd like to yield my time to Senator Hansen.

KELLY: Senator Hansen, 4 minutes, 50 seconds.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. I just got informed by an article that came out today in the Lincoln Journal Star. And the timing is, is ironic. Maybe, maybe not. It's not an April Fool's Day joke, but they just stated that the unemployment rate in Nebraska is up to 3%, the highest it's been since 2020, during the height of a-- height of a pandemic. So as minimum wage goes up, one of the arguments we're hearing is that we'll be able to hire more people. Money goes back into the system. Employers benefit. They can hire more people. It actually decreases unemployment. Well, how come ever since this ballot initiative passed and minimum wage has gone up, unemployment now is also going up? One of the quest-- or, one of the comments that I heard earlier as well, I think maybe today, is the idea that, what kind of value do we put on employees? I think maybe it was Senator Dungan or Senator John Cavanaugh that mentioned this. And I get their point. Is what kind of-- OK. I've been, I've been informed that it's Senator Dungan. What kind of value do we put on employees? How much are they worth? Here's, here's the reality of the situation: we don't determine their worth. The 49 of us here, we don't determine their value. The consumers do. The free market does. The employers do. Any time we start putting our thumbs on the scales of how much we think people are worth, what's their value, it usually never turns out good. When was the last time you ever heard of the government getting involved in something and then, you know what, at the end, it turned out great? Almost never. We're always spending more money. There's more problems. There's more unemployment. There's more poverty. That's exactly what we're doing here. I was talk-- again, talking about automation, loss of entry-level jobs. Entry-level jobs are critical for developing skills, gaining experience, and moving up the economic ladder. When these jobs disappear, workers are left with fewer opportunities in advance, trapping them in long-term unemployment. And the whole idea about inflation-- I want to go back to the idea of inflation because we were talking about that earlier. Minimum wage increases don't just affect workers and employers. They, they impact us as consumers. When labor costs rise, businesses pass those costs onto consumers through higher prices. This is what I was talking about what the definition of inflation is, or what makes up inflation. One of them is rising production costs, which-- one of the biggest factors of that is, is employment costs, labor costs, which is what we're talking about here with Senator Raybould's bill. This can lead to inflation, which erodes purchasing power and cancels out the wage increase. How often have we heard that the last four or five years? We got more money in our pockets, but stuff just costs a lot more. But we never ask ourselves

why it costs more. We typically just say, how can we put more money in the pockets of people with government intervention? Typically, it never works out good, which is exactly what we're talking about here. A 2022 study published in the Quarterly Journal of Economics found that every 10% increase in the minimum wage leads to a 0.4% decrease-- or, increase in restaurant prices. The people most hurt by these price increases are low-income consumers, the very group this policy's supposed to help. Almost always comes full circle to who we're hurting through this legislation. And it's not just fast food. Grocery stores, gas stations, other essential services also raise prices when wages go up. The result, a higher cost of living that offsets any wage gains. We talk about intention. Did the people really know when they checked the box on the ballot what they were voting for? I think they did. I think they knew what they were voting for when it says, increase \$15 an hour, starting 2027, I believe. I think it's the outcome that may have-- that I have some questions about when it comes to the voter and their-- the outcome of this bill long term. I asked this question to people when they came to the hearing, and I didn't quite get a straight answer. When I asked people coming in fa-- or, against Senator Raybould's bill in favor of the minimum wage, they couldn't quite give me the answer I was looking for. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hansen. Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Good a-- good morning, colleagues. I'm glad to see the proponents of this measure kind of light up. I like it when they get triggered by debate and feel like they need to jump in. And with all due respect, what the voters say, it's not an advisory and opinion. And a true libertarian and a true conservative and a true patriot would understand that voters don't need guardrails on direct democracy. Period. They don't need guardrails. They read the measure. They voted for the measure. They mandated modest but meaningful wages for themselves and their fellow Nebraskans. The only government interference, Senator Hansen, is this body trying to undo the will of the voters. The Legislature didn't put this mandate on small businesses, large businesses, rural businesses, metro businesses. The voters themselves did. Your quarrel is with democracy. And Senator Hansen, I know that you think it's interesting that today there was a headline that low-- unemployment remains low but has ticked up a bit. This measure's been on the books since 2022. Our unemployment rate in Nebraska has been below 4% over multiple increases in the minimum wage, historically and presently. And let me quote to you from a captain of industry, Mark Whitehead, who is chairing the Lincoln Independent Business Association-- one of the

most conservative business groups in Nebraska. And I know Mark, and I like Mark, and I've worked with Mark. And here's what he had to say about state minimum wage increases in the World-Herald in December 30, 2023. He said, the change in the minimum wage is less important than market forces. A strong economy means a lower unemployment rate that produces higher pay. Quote, the Lincoln labor market has been well below effectively zero unemployment, as defined at 4% or under by most economists, for a significant number of years. As such, for almost all service-level businesses, the minimum wage is irrelevant. The market dictates a higher rate. So there's another business voice talking about these issues and completely undercutting the junk economics you just put into the record. And let's talk about the bigger issues that this Legislature's pushing. Yesterday, at the Retirement Committee level, a majority of the committee sought to quash benefits for the surviving spouses of NSP officers, State Patrol officers. This body has moved forward with efforts to increase your garbage fees. This body has moved forward with efforts to give more latitude to increase your hunting and fishing license and park fees. This body is moving forward with measures to increase your DMV fees. This body is putting forward inadequate investments in community colleges, higher educations, and the university, which will increase your tuition fees. This body is rushing forward with now the third attempt to increase regressive sales taxes on those who can least afford it-- the working poor and seniors-- to balance the budget that you blew a hole in because you think millionaire and billionaire tax cuts are more important than having a strong university or good economic development. And now it's not enough. It's still not enough. It's still not enough. Now we have to undercut the will of the people by carve-outs and caps on sick leave, carve-outs and caps on minimum wage. When people wonder why there's a cynicism in regards to whether or not their vote matters, it's because of bodies like this. I know there's all kinds of conversations happening right now about, well, what if we did this percent? What if we did that percent? What if we address this? Yes, negotiations are part of the process, but here's the thing: direct democracy does not need your negotiations. You had the chance to work on this. The body said no. The people took the will into their own hands. You don't have to agree with it. But if you knew what you were voting for when voted yay or nay on sick leave or minimum wage, you have to extend the same respect and courtesy to your fellow Nebraskans--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

CONRAD: --who had the same ability to decide how to cast their vote.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Conrad. Senator Hunt, you're recognized to speak.

HUNT: Thank you, Mr. President. One point I haven't heard raised yet in this discussion is something that we've long accepted in our society, that age discrimination in employment is wrong. And when this bill came up, oh, I guess, last year in the Business and Labor Committee when I was on that committee-- and we held it in committee. It didn't come out, I don't think. That was something that was talked about in the committee hearing originally when we had more balanced committees. In fact, we've codified that principle against age discrimination into federal law. The Age Discrimination Act of 1967 makes it illegal to discriminate against workers aged 40 and up on the basis of their age, especially when it comes to wages. So you can't say to a 55-year-old, well, you're older now. You're a little bit slower. You might not be in your prime physically, so now we're going to pay you less. We would never stand for that. And we've had protections in place for over 50 years to ensure that we don't. So colleagues, why is it acceptable to do the same thing for younger workers? If we believe that age alone isn't a fair determinant of someone's value or productivity later in life, why do we believe it is earlier in life? We can't make the assumption that an older worker is inherently more efficient, skilled, or productive, or even experienced than a younger one. That's not a safe or fair generalization. In fact, in many jobs, especially physical roles like stocking shelves, running a register during long shifts, working in a kitchen, loading delivery trucks, younger workers might actually outperform their older counterparts in terms of speed, strength, and stamina. This is age discrimination, plain and simple. And the voters of Nebraska have already said that they don't want a tiered wage system. They want a minimum wage that applies equally because equal work should be equal pay, regardless of age. You know, if we want to talk about tiered wages, should we talk about adjusting the wage that we receive as senators or the per diem to reflect something like how long we spend engaging in debate or how frequently we respond to our constituents? Because I think that some of you people would not be earning the same wage as other people if we were paid based on our productivity here in the Legislature. This is a double standard, colleagues. If we're serious about equal pay for equal work, we cannot maintain this standard of a different tier of pay for younger workers. It's not just a moral argument. It actually doesn't matter morally what I think. It doesn't matter what Milton Friedman thinks, Senator Hansen. It doesn't matter what economists believe is the best wage for anybody. All that matters is what Nebraskans told us when they voted for this minimum

wage increase. They didn't vote for exceptions, carve-outs, or tiered pay scales. They voted for an increase. So let's not undermine that with a policy that applies one set of antidiscrimination principles to one group and abandons them for another group. Senator Raybould talks about, well, these 14-, 15-year-old kids, they're not going to have jobs. They're not gonna be getting jobs under this bill. No, Senator Raybould. Speak for yourself. You're not going to be employing them. Super Saver Grocery Store, whatever the name of it is, is not going to be employing these kids because you don't want to pay them. Speak for yourself. Other businesses do not work that way and do not run their business the way you do. And as Senator Conrad said, business owners do not speak with one voice on this bill. Speaking as a business owner myself, you know what motivates me to increase sales, to increase revenue? Increased expenses. I'm the last one to get paid in my business, and my employees know that. And when we need to increase sales, grow the business-- what every business owner's trying to do-- it's my employees who make more than the minimum wage, who have good benefits, who are in charge of increasing those sales because I'm here arguing for the right of other employees in Nebraska to get fair pay too. This is a business problem. This isn't something that we need to put on the backs of workers who are helping us make money, who are helping us run successful businesses. And the right attitude isn't to turn around to them and say, well, 14-, 15-year-olds, you're not even gonna have a job if I have to pay you a fair wage. We don't get to override the will of the people just because we sit in these chairs. That's not what service looks like in a democracy. And to suggest that our discomfort with the choice of the voters is more important than the outcome of our own elections-- it's not representation; it's overreach. And it's selfish, self-serving. I've never seen such blatant self-dealing. And Senator Raybould, if you don't want to hire 14- and 15-year-olds, just say that. The rest of us are. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hunt. Mr. Clerk for items.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Thank you, Mr. President. Senator Kauth would withdraw a series of motions to LB530. Senator Murman, amendment-- an amendment to LB428. Committee on Natural Resources, chaired by Senator Brandt, reports LB36 to General File with an amendment. Retirement Systems Committee, chaired by Senator Ballard, reports LB76 to General File with an amendment. Appropriations Committee will hold an executive session in Room 1003 at noon. Appropriations, executive session in Room 1003 at noon. Finally, Mr. President, a priority motion: Senator Hughes would move to recess the body until 1:30 p.m.

KELLY: Members, you've heard the motion to recess. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed, nay. The Legislature is in recess.

[RECESS]

ARCH: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber. The afternoon session is about to reconvene. Senators, please record your presence. Roll call. Mr. Clerk, please record.

ASSISTANT CLERK: There's a quorum present, Mr. President.

ARCH: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Do you have any items for the record?

ASSISTANT CLERK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. Communication from the Governor, regarding an appointment of Roy Christensen to the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. That's all I have, Mr. President.

ARCH: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. We will proceed to the first item on this afternoon's agenda. Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President, LB258, when the Legislature recessed, the body was considering the bill, and the current motion before the bill is a motion to reconsider the vote taken on the motion to indefinitely postpone.

ARCH: Turning to the cue, Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, colleagues. They put me up first in the afternoon because, you know, I get folks in the room. It's always a crowd to hear me talk. So I rise in support of the motion to reconsider and in favor of the IPP and opposed to LB258, and continue with my conversation. So when I was last talking, which was obviously before lunch and maybe an hour before that, I went through the list of all of the different federal changes in the federal minimum wage, which the last was in 2009. It was at-- set at \$7.25. And then after that, the state of Nebraska, by ballot initiative in, I think it was 2014, increased it to \$9 an hour. And then this ballot initiative was after that, in 2022, to increase it up to where it is now, with a continued stepped-up approach. So I've previously said my opposition to the portion in Senator Raybould's bill that would cap the increase at 1.5 per year. And my problem with that is that it's-- the ballot initiative language pegs it to CPI, which means when there's inflation, then the minimum wage would go up

in proportion to that, keeping the purchasing power on par with the-- you know, with inflation. And the problem with a, a either/or approach, as Senator Raybould's amendment includes, with the 1.5, with a cap, it means that there will be times where the minimum wage will not go up and there will times where inflation is greater than 1.5% and it'll only go up that amount, which means that you will have, over time, an erosion in the purchasing power of the minimum wage in the state of Nebraska, which is clearly not what the voters wanted. The voters wanted a minimum wage that would continue to go up. And I talked about all those different increases over the decades, going back to 1938, as sort of a way of explaining that, you know, folks-- there were many times where there were quick and successive increases, and periodic, '78, '79, '80, '81. Then, 9 years off to 1990, '91, '96, so a 5-year gap, then '97, and then a 10-year gap to 2007, 2008, 2009. So-- and then we've had now, a 15-year gap in the federal minimum wage. But basically, folks are, you know-- Nebraska citizens are articulating the reason-- or their, their opinion that they would like to see the minimum wage go up regularly. It had-- the federal government had done it for a long time and then just stopped. Right? And we've had a long time with no increase in the federal minimum wage. The voters have taken it on themselves in 2 successive ballot initiatives. And you know, the first one, the folks, the citizens raised it up and then it didn't keep, keep parity and though there was no federal increase, so the voters went back to the ballot box, and again, increased the minimum wage. But this time, they did it explicitly with a peg to the consumer price index U for the Midwest, which would then allow it to continue to go up every year. And so, I think it's really important that the, the voters were deliberate and intentional about doing that. I think it's really important that we continue to respect that, and I think it is important that we actually respect the idea that the minimum wage should go up and should continue to be on par with the purchasing power. So, I, I-- I'm opposed to pegging or Senator Raybould's suggestion of capping it at 1.5. I would be opposed to any either/or approach like that, which would be a cap with the bottom end, meaning that folk-- the employees would not get the benefit of an increase that was larger, but the-- their wage would be depressed artificially by a-- if the CPI was less than 1.5 or less than 2 or whatever it is that would be any number that might be thrown out as some sort of suggestion. The real problem, aside from an artificially low cap, is the fact that having an either/or approach is also problematic, because it gives-- it does not respect that will of the voters to have it continually going up and keeping pace. So I'm, again, in favor of the reconsider, opposed to-- or in favor of IPP, opposed to LB258. And when we get to cloture,

which maybe is later today, I'm not sure what the time scale is, I would encourage your red vote on cloture. If you are opposed to the bill, if you're opposed to it in the current construction, I would encourage you to vote no on cloture at this time.

ARCH: Time, Senator.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Mr. Clerk, for an item.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Thank you, Mr. President. Judiciary Committee will hold an executive session at 1:45 in room 2022. Judiciary Committee, 20-- room 2022 at 1:45. That-- that's all I have, Mr President.

ARCH: Returning to the queue, Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, colleagues. I rise again in favor of the motion to reconsider and in favor of the indefinitely postpone motion and against LB258. There's 2 points that I wanted to touch on this time on the mic as we continue to discuss this, and one is just to, to broadly say, none of us in this body are economists. And I think that that's abundantly clear when we all talk with each other. I think all of us do our best to understand these things. And I think it is important that we do everything we can to research these issues to better understand the impact, but none of us in here are experts in the economy, which is unfortunate. I wish we had somebody here that studies that, maybe that had a, a doctorate or something in that. And maybe I'm wrong. If any of my colleagues want to correct me, they can. But I think it's important to note that when we start having these conversations about what does and doesn't have an impact on the economy broadly. I know Senator Hansen and some others have talked about sort of this concern they have that if you increase the minimum wage you're going to decrease the jobs. I can look up any number of studies right now-- and I did, during the lunch hour and after that discussion-- that dispute that, that very plainly say, recent studies that have analyzed, both at local and larger levels, the increase in minimum wage, have demonstrated that there is not a significant decrease in jobs. And I'm sure that we can continue to have conversations about certain areas where that has happened or others where it hasn't happened, but broadly, my understanding, from also speaking with some other individuals who do know more about this than me, that that just isn't the case. So I just want to very gently and respectfully push back on that. We've also

talked about the concerns on inflation and this conversation that folks have had about this sort of wage price spiral, where wages go up and therefore costs go up, and wages go up and costs go up, you spiral into this concern where the cost of living just drastically increases. Similarly, it's been demonstrated that there is not a significant correlation between-- or causation between an increase in minimum wage and that wage and price spiral. There's any number of factors that can go into that, like supply chain issues, and any, any number of other problems that crop up in an economic environment, and to act like it's a, a singular, causal relationship between those 2 things, I just think is inaccurate. And we have to look at the broader picture into what causes these problems. Now, we're not going to figure it out on the floor of the Legislature. If we could just sit here right now and figure out how to fix inflation, I'm pretty sure that others before us would have come up with that idea. But what we can do, is we can take measures to actually help people who are suffering due to inflation. And what I'm frustrated by is this concern where it sounds like people are all saying on the mic they want to help low-income and working people, but this isn't the way to do it. So my question back to you is what is the way to do it? Because we've had consistent recommendations to increase, for example, the state child tax credit, which is one of the most demonstrative ways to pull people out of poverty, and that's been shot down year after year. We've talked about increasing the state portion of the EITC, the earned ta-- the Earned Income Tax Credit, and not been able to get that across the finish line. Again, a demonstrative way to pull people out of poverty. And so, what we're talking about is giving people a little bit more money in their pockets to ensure that they're able to make ends meet. I've talked every time I'm on the mic about the difference between a minimum wage and a living wage. And at the very base definition, a living wage is the amount of money that one would have to make while working a full-time job in order to meet basic life needs. What's, what's interesting is MIT, who I do think knows generally what they're talking about, has a living wage calculator, where you can actually look up your living wage for different states, and most interestingly, specific counties. So when I pulled this up, I was looking at the living wage calculator for Nebraska. And if you click on Nebraska as a whole, the living wage that's required for somebody with zero children is \$20.99 an hour. \$20.99 an hour, with one child, it jumps to \$36. Now somebody's going to probably say, oh, well, that's statewide. Let's look at individual counties. Let me click randomly on Thayer County. With zero children, the living wage is \$19.63. Dawson County, the living wage is \$18.69. Hooker County, the living wage is \$20.09. My point is, colleagues, we're not talking about something

astronomical. We're talking about giving people just a little bit more money. I know it's a complicated issue. We're going to continue talking about it, but we need to situate what we're discussing, in terms of money in pockets and what it means in terms of spending power for those people who are trying to make ends meet. So I encourage my colleagues to think about this bill before you pass it without having dived--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

DUNGAN: --into the specifics. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator McKinney, you're recognized to speak.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Mr. President. Senator Dungan, I knew I was onto something when I said I, I thought it should be \$20 an hour. But on that note, I'll yield my time to Senator Conrad.

ARCH: Senator Conrad, 4 minutes, 45.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you to my friend, Senator McKinney. The other piece that I just wanted to lift up in regards to the nuances of this debate was when voters in Nebraska or in our state-- sister states that have tools of direct democracy, i.e. initiative, citizen initiative, have been presented with questions about minimum wage increases and keep in mind about, generally speaking, about half of our sister states have citizen initiatives available to empower their electorate to act or to check the legislative branch when it doesn't act or it acts against their wishes. And to hear Senator Raybould and Senator Hallstrom talk about it, they seem to think that, oh, it's, it's totally fine for the Legislature to undercut the will of the people whenever they feel like it, as long as they can have a supermajority to do so. But I guess what's good to know for Nebraska voters, even though there are those of us fighting to effectuate and breathe life in and maintain and protect the will of the voters in regards to minimum wage and sick leave, is that I guess in future ballot initiatives, everything will have to go in the constitution instead of having a statutory initiative, which I think is ridiculous. And that kind of civics discussion shouldn't even be part of the debate. We should honor the will of the people when they act as co-equal-- with co-equal legislative authority. And this measure, which they increase the, the minimum wage, has been on the books for a couple of years, and the job loss and the other parade of horribilis that Senator Raybould and others trot out hasn't happened, hasn't happened when Nebraska has

increased its minimum wage multiple times, including recently. And when voters in our sister states are presented with meaningful but modest minimum wage amendments, they typically support them, but they don't always. If citizens overshoot local economic conditions or try to go too far too fast, voters have the discernment to understand that that may not be a good policy choice when they read a petition, when they sign a petition, when they vote on a measure. In fact, our sister states of Montana and Missouri saw citizens turn down minimum wage initiatives when they were out of alignment with local economic conditions, historically. And presently, just in the last cycle, citizens in the most progressive states in the country, Massachusetts and California, turned down significant minimum wage increases, after an almost unyielding march towards progress in regards to citizen initiatives on minimum wage. Voters, regardless of their political stripes, regardless of the political landscape they emanate from, have the discernment to decide if minimum wage meets their local conditions or not. And they have, and they do. Thanks for watching! And it's wrong for Senator Raybould and Senator Hallstrom and others, Senator Hansen, that are pushing these efforts to undercut the will of the voters and working families to not afford voters' respect. What makes this cynical effort any different than the election deniers that sprung up in the wake of President Trump's loss? If you honor the will of the voters in taking your seat in this Legislature, you should honor the will of the voters on citizen initiatives. Whether you agree with them or not, that time has passed. Whether you're upset somebody spent money on an election, which by the way then, your quarrel isn't with the electoral activities, your quarrel is with the First Amendment. So enough sour grapes and hand-wringing about that. But it's all a distraction from the fact you're undercutting the will of the voters and you're kicking low-income workers and youth workers when they've already got a lot of challenges on their head.

ARCH: Time, Senator. Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to speak.

HOLDCROFT: Question.

ARCH: The question has been called, do I see 5 hands? I do. The question is, shall debate cease? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. There has been a request to place the house under call. The question is, shall the house go under call? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 22 ayes, 0 nays to place the house under call, Mr. President.

ARCH: The house is under call. Senators, please record your presence. Those unexcused senators outside the Chamber, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. All unauthorized personnel, please leave the floor. The house under call. Senators John Cavanaugh and McKinney, please return to the Chamber. The house is under call. All unexcused members are now present. The question is, shall debate cease? Senator Holdcroft, will you allow for call-ins?

ASSISTANT CLERK: Senator Hunt voting no. Senator John Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Dungan voting no. Senator Riepe voting yes. Senator Ibach voting yes. Senator von Gillern voting yes. Senator Sanders voting yes. Senator Hallstrom voting yes. Senator Murman voting yes. Senator Storer voting yes. Senator Lippincott voting yes.

ARCH: Mr. Clerk, please record.

ASSISTANT CLERK: 20-- 25 ayes, 5 nays to cease debate, Mr. President.

ARCH: Debate does cease. Senator Conrad, you are recognized to close on your reconsideration motion.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President, and good afternoon, colleagues. Again, Nebraska voters voted for modest but meaningful increases in the state minimum wage. Part of that, by design, was a policy choice to ensure that minimum wage rose to better meet inflationary effects and impacts, so that the value of minimum wage did not continue to deteriorate over time and so that citizens wouldn't have to continually, every few years, have different citizen initiatives, but instead followed a thoughtful policy model that about 20 of our sister states utilize, in regards to their minimum wage policy as well, that has built-in increases to help ensure low-income working families can have a better opportunity to have fair pay for fair work. That is, that is part-- that was a deliberate policy choice that voters understood and they checked the box yes for. So in addition to working as hard as you can to set priorities this session to undermine the will of the voters when it comes to winner-take-all or modest but meaningful earned sick leave or earned wages for hard work in retail establishments, in healthcare establishments, in restaurant establishments, the places young people work, young workers work, the places minimum wage workers work, who are primarily over 20, but not all, who have families, who are working and living in poverty, who are women, who are in rural Nebraska, who are Nebraskans of color, not only are you content with undercutting the will of voters and democracy, but you're trying to make it harder for working families and young workers to succeed by putting in artificial caps and

carve-outs and sub-minimum wages. Well, here's news. Nebraska young workers are not sub-human and they shouldn't be paid sub-minimum wages. Nebraska voters had choices whether or not to have caps or carve-outs, and they decided to move forward with the initiative, which did not have artificial caps and carve-- carve-outs. Opponents didn't run a serious campaign, but relied upon a cynical Legislature to come in and do their bidding. And let's talk about what the impact is. So under Senator Raybould's provision, LB258, a person working a part-time job in Lincoln, Nebraska for 20 hours a week on a youth or training minimum wage of \$13.50 an hour would have an estimated weekly take-home pay of \$243 after tax. A person working a part-time job, 20 hours a week at regular minimum wage of \$15 an hour by 2026, as passed by Ballot Initiative 433 with 60-- almost 60% of Nebraska voters in support, in 2022, would have an estimated weekly take-home pay of \$269 after taxes. Friends, the difference between the 2 numbers is \$26. Over a year, if that same worker works 52 weeks a year, it's 13-- it's \$1,352 out of their pocket. You haven't said how low-income workers are supposed to make up the difference. You haven't said what you'd say to their face if young workers were here-- they're not. They're in school, actually. They have multiple jobs because they're going to school for eight hours and they're working to support themselves or their family. They're not here because they are in school. You're working to take over \$1,300 out of their pocket and to undercut the will of the voters. After last week, you took away a big chunk of their sick leave. When's it enough? When's enough? When's it enough? What is the number? Do you stop messing with the will of the people if it's 90%? Do you start messing with the will the people--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

CONRAD: --if it's the fourth time you're asked? When's it enough?

ARCH: Colleagues, the question before the body is the motion to reconsider. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. There has been a request for a roll call vote. Mr. Clerk, please call the roll.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Senator Andersen voting no. Senator Arch voting no. Senator Armendariz voting no. Senator Ballard voting no. Senator Bosn voting no. Senator Bostar voting yes. Senator Brandt voting no. Senator John Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator Clements. Senator Clouse voting no. Senator Conrad voting yes. Senator DeBoer voting yes. Senator DeKay voting no. Senator Dorn voting no. Senator Dover. Senator Dungan voting yes. Senator Fredrickson voting yes. Senator Guereca voting yes. Senator Hallstrom

voting no. Senator Hansen voting no. Senator Hardin, Senator Hardin voting no. Senator Holdcroft voting no. Senator Hughes voting no. Senator Hunt voting yes. Senator Ibach voting no. Senator Jacobson voting no. Senator Juarez voting yes. Senator Kauth voting no. Senator Lippincott voting no. Senator Lonowski voting no. Senator McKeon voting no. Senator McKinney voting yes. Senator Meyer voting no. Senator Moser voting no. Senator Murman voting no. Senator Prokop voting yes. Senator Quick voting yes. Senator Raybould voting no. Senator Riepe voting no. Senator Rountree voting yes. Senator Sanders voting no. Senator Sorrentino voting no. Senator Spivey voting yes. Senator Storer voting no. Senator Storm voting no. Senator Strommen voting no. Senator von Gillern voting no. Senator Wordekemper voting no. 15 ayes, 33 nays on the motion to reconsider.

ARCH: The motion to reconsider is not successful. Mr. Clerk, next item. I raise the call.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President, LB258, introduced by Senator Raybould. A bill for an act relating to the Wage and Hour Act; to amend Section 48-1203.01, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and Section 48-1203, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2024; to change provisions relating to the minimum wage and the training wage; to enact a youth minimum wage; to harmonize provisions; and to repeal the original sections. The bill was first read on January 14 of this year. It was referred to the Business and Labor Committee. That committee reports the bill to General File. There are committee amendments and other amendments pending, Mr. President.

ARCH: Mr. Clerk, for a committee amendment. Senator Kauth, you are recognized to open.

KAUTH: We're opening on the committee amendment for LB258. So this was adjusting parts of the bill, and I believe Senator Raybould has much more information about that. And I'm sorry, I didn't write anything down. So Senator Raybould, would you like to take that question?

ARCH: Senator Raybould, will you yield to a question?

RAYBOULD: Yes, I would yield to a question, and to follow up and provide more information.

KAUTH: Thank you very much.

RAYBOULD: Yes. OK. So AM272 was a, a correction and clarification on the training wage. In our current statute, in Nebraska right now, a training wage is listed as 75% of the federal minimum wage. So that

federal minimum wage is \$7.25. 75% of that is \$5.44. This is something that the ballot initiative did not address, nor did it touch, nor did it make any modification or changes in the language that was presented to the voters, nor did it have any information as part of the Secretary of State identification on this. And so, basically, we had followed the same language as in the Nebraska statute. It actually said 20 and under. We changed that language with AM272 to clarify that it meant 19-, 18-, 17-, and 16-year-olds, to be very specific, so that the training wage is for 90 days, and it comes out to 90% of Nebraska state minimum wage. 90% percent of Nebraska state minimum wage-- when it goes up January 1 of 2026, will be \$13.50. So that represents 90% of Nebraska's state minimum wage, and that training wage would be increased annually by 1.5%. So I wanted to give you just a, a little bit more information. AM272 would increase the youth minimum wage by 1.5% every 5 years. So-- and I'm sorry. I talked about the training wage, and now we're gonna jump to the youth wage. The youth wage involves 14- and 15-year-olds. And so for that clarification, it would increase the youth minimum wage by 1.5%, 1.5% every 5 years, with the first occur-- increase occurring on January 3-- January 1, 2030. The training wage would increase by 1.5% annually, beginning on January 1, 2027. Additionally, the training wage would apply to youths aged 16, 17, 18, and 19. And those are just the clean-up that the committee came up with to, to make sure that it was clear to all who were reading this wage modification that is something that the ballot initiative did not touch. And you know, I do feel compelled, if I still have a few minutes, to, to really continue to address some of the, the misinformation and sort of the toxic tirade against one or two of our colleagues here in the Chamber, that is not really giving full weight to the things that we have been saying. And so I appreciate a lot of colleagues who have been listening. And I want to thank those watching us on TV, but I have always said that we have heard a lot from the people of our state. And we are co-equal branches of government. That's what makes our Unicameral so unique, and it's so true. And you don't have to look any further than our own constitution, which we have pointed out several times that I feel that sometimes, is being ignored on the language in our constitution that clearly allows legislatures to make modifications. That's enshrined in our constitution. We're not using it to undermine the will of the people. We're doing it to review and reflect and make sure we make it a clear balance and have a clear understanding of the unintended consequences and impacts it can have on businesses, on daycare centers, on paying for referees for our youth sports. All these costs will be passed on. But I wanna jump back to the language in the constitution. The language in the constitution gives the power of the

initiative to the people, and the power to enact changes to those initiatives is given to the Legislature upon a vote of at least two-thirds of all the members. So we're required to have that higher threshold of two-thirds of the majority. That is the balance. That is what we seek to create. That is our job as legislatures. We are authorized and empowered by our constitution to act, to act in this fashion, to do our jobs, to listen to all of our constituents. All of our constituents means all of our constituents, it just doesn't mean to the loudest group of individuals who come forth. And we do it with thoughtful, mindful deliberation, to make sure that whatever policies we enact are in the interest, in the benefit of our fellow Nebraskans. To suggest that it is wrong for the Legislature to deliberate and bring thoughtful changes to legislation passed by initiative, you're saying that it is wrong for the people to give the right to a referendum, and I say that is wrong. That is a right that is enshrined. Being co-equal branches means equal. The power of initiative gives the people 2 choices, for or against. They don't get the opportunity to consider option A or option B. The language is set before them, and they take it or leave it. As the co-equal branch of-- to the people, we hold that responsibility, and we should respect that as well. So going back before the amendment before you, AM272, just to clarify, it clarifies the ages of the training wage from 16-19 years of age. 90% of the Nebraska state minimum wage for 90 days. 90% of the minimum wage-- we're assuming that it'll go forward as \$15-- is \$13.50. And for 90 days of that training period, you get paid \$13.50. After that 90 days, you automatically advance on to the minimum wage. The youth wage, as we have described before, quite a few times, references 14- and 15-year-olds. It sets the youth wage at \$13.50. That has an increase every 5 years of 1.5%. And the idea and-- behind all of this was to make sure that folks would want to hire 14- and 15-year-olds. I know Senator Hunt had asked a question on the floor, and I wanted to let her know that, that our business, we do not hire 14- and 15-year-olds. On one of the handouts that I presented to you, it clearly talks about so many things that a 14- and 15-year-old cannot do, and they're not allowed to do, even if they were-- had sufficient training, because these are federal OSHA guidelines, restrictions, and there are severe penalties for them. And so I'm just gonna read it one more time, what a 14- and 15-year-old are not permitted to do. They may only perform non-hazardous duties, may not clean or operate powered equipment used in baking or meat processing, including mixers and meat slicers, may not operate paper box compactors, may not operate power-driven lifts, elevators, may not load, operate or unload power-driven balers and compactors, may only perform limited cooking and cleaning duties, may not perform any

duties involved in baking, may only work 3 hours weekday outside of school hours, may only work limited hours on non-school days or when school is in and out of session, and may not work in freezers or meat coolers. Now this just pertains to retailers and fast food providers and restaurants, but there is a whole list and category of prohibited uses for those youth in, in agriculture industries or other industries that you can check out on the OSHA guidelines. So I'm, I'm happy to answer any questions or clarify any of the language on AM272. It was passed out of the Business and Labor Committee with one abs-- one vote voting no, but we do ask for your consideration, because this clarifies and cleans up the language that we reference in LB258 and I ask for your support on it. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Clouse would like to recognize 20 special guests, fourth grade students from Zion Lutheran School in Kearney, Nebraska. They are located in the north balcony. Students, if you would rise and be welcomed by your Nebraska Legislature. Mr. Clerk, for a motion.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Conrad would move to bracket LB258 until June 9, 2025.

ARCH: Senator Conrad, you are recognized to open on your bracket motion.

CONRAD: Thank you Mr. President. Good afternoon, colleagues. So one thing that I want to make sure to be clear about is kind of where we are, in terms of minimum wage policy in Nebraska. So this has been our stated intent, as a state, in terms of minimum wage policy, since 1967. If you look at Nebraska Revised Statute 48-1201, the public policy of Nebraska in regards to minimum wage is and has been, since 1967, and is presently today: it is declared to be the policy of this state to establish a minimum wage for all workers at all levels consistent with their health, efficiency, and general well-being, and to safeguard, to safeguard-- not undercut, to safe guard-- existing minimum wage compensation standards, which are adequate to maintain health, efficiency, and general well-being of workers against unfair competition of wage and hour standards, which do not provide adequate standards of living. That's been the stated public policy goal of our minimum wage statutes in Nebraska since 1967. And then the next section goes on to define the different terms. Who's the employer, who's the employees, how the compensation will work, and then it has exemptions. And it says we're not going to include folks in ag, basically, for our minimum wage policy-- a historical carve-out for certain industries for political purposes that perpetuate racial and gender inequity, but nevertheless. Then we have carve-outs for those

involved in babysitting and domestic care. Same policy and political underpinnings as the other historical carve-outs. And then we have carve-outs for government employers, and we have some for religious entities, and we have some when a mom and dad are employing their kids in their family business. And then, we go on to also talk about exemptions for really small employers in Nebraska. Then we go on, in the next section, to set the actual minimum wage rate, which the voters have set via initiatives because this Legislature failed to act. So they took matters into their own hands in 2014, and again, 7 years later, in 2022, by increasing the minimum wage with modest increases to keep better pace with inflation and without carve-outs. So tell me how exactly the work that you're doing to impose arbitrary caps and carving out young workers for subminimum wages, tell me how that upholds the public policy goal of Nebraska to safeguard existing minimum wage compensation standards? Because our predecessors, when they adopted this law decades ago, in 1967, understood a sensible minimum wage policy for Nebraska was a part of a vibrant economy and ensured better life outcomes for low-income workers, whether they're emptying bedpans in the nursing home, whether they're stocking shelves, whether they're taking orders at a restaurant, whether they're mopping the floor and working in janitorial services. Our predecessors, the people who held these seats prior to us and sat in this incredible Chamber and were a part of this proud institution, understood, as far back as 1967 that the Legislature and the public policy of this state should guard against evisceration of existing minimum wage standard. So tell me, how do caps and carve-outs guard against existing minimum wage standards? When we don't have fair pay for fair work, we undercut working families' ability to succeed. We push working family-- families onto public assistance and work support programs that cost taxpayer money, and we perpetuate inequities by giving massive tax cuts to the biggest businesses that are unsustainable, inequitable, and unaffordable and blowing a hole in our budget. You've already given a gift to Nebraska businesses, but that's not enough. It's not to push down our tax rate. It's not enough to blow a hole in our budget. Now you also have to give them another special favor and sweetheart deal by carving up the voters' will with sick leave. And now, carving up the voter's will with minimum wage. It's not enough to subsidize big business with incentive programs. It's not enough to subsidize big business with huge tax cuts. It's not enough to subsidize big business with work support programs when they don't pay their employees a fair wage and provide benefits. You're propping up sub-poverty wages with crappy benefits and you're incentivizing it and you're rewarding it for the big businesses that perpetuate that, and you're kicking the low-wage worker who makes all

of it possible. I know it's fun to look down your nose and sneer at somebody who works for a living, that washes a table, that empties a bedpan, that takes an order, that stocks a shelf. But you know what? Without each Nebraskan doing their part in our economy, it doesn't work for anyone. So why can't we honor the dignity of work? Why can't honor the will of the voters? Friends, I've been here for 11 years. I will tell you, there are tough, tough questions that come before the Legislature, where there's tough calls and good points all the way around. This is not one of those instances. It should not be hard to uphold the will of your voters. And look, look at what your voters said. Go back and look at the votes on Initiative 433 that you're trying to undercut with LB258. Look no further than Senator Raybould's district. It was one of the highest percentages in support of increased minimum wages, at 75% of the vote. My district, 72%. Go back and look at what your district wanted. Senator Clements, 56.9%. Senator von Gillern, 61.4%. Senator Riepe, who I know keeps a careful pulse on the voters' interests in his district, 68%, Senator Riepe. 68% of your voters voted for a modest yet meaningful minimum wage increase. Speaker Arch, 62%, 62% of your voters in a conservative district wanted a modest but minimum, minimum wage increase. Right here, another friend, in north Lincoln, Senator Ballard, 58%. Another friend in south Lincoln, colleagues, Senator Bosn, 59%.

DeBOER: Time, Senator.

CONRAD: Almost 60% of your voters wanted a modest but minimum wage increase. Thank--

DeBOER: Senator Jacobson, you're next.

JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam President. I've been watching and listening all day and taking in all of the arguments. It's pretty clear that everyone's pretty dug in on this issue, and we're hearing the same argument over and over and over again. So here's what I heard. I heard that we need this minimum wage bill, but yet, Wyoming is \$7.25, Iowa is \$7 25 cents, Kansas is \$7.25, South Dakota is \$11.50, but Nebraska needs to be much, much higher. I've also heard that we did a vote of the people. OK. This is a referendum. So let's just talk a little bit about referendums again, because the voter threshold is very low to get that voter referendum on the ballot, as opposed to a constitutional amendment. And in Article III-2, powers to rever-- to reserve, the Legislature shall not amend, repeal, modify, or impair a law enacted by the people by an initiative, but, but however, except upon a vote of at least two-thirds of all the members of the Legislature. Do I need to repeat that? Except by the vote of

two-thirds of the member of the Legislature. So don't make it sound like we can't do this, and don't make it sound that this is unprecedented. Go get the 10% of the voters that you need to make a constitutional amendment, not 5%. So again, \$3.5 million might be enough to buy 5% of the voters, \$10 per signature, but, but I think when you start looking at the reality-- first, let me ask, would you vote for something where you would receive more and someone else would pay it? Why was it so hard to imagine that people would vote-- that people that are working and making less than the minimum wage would not vote for this? And I also heard that living wages-- when you think about a living wage. Well, minimum wage isn't a living wage. Minimum wage is-- says you cannot work in the state of Nebraska if you're going to be paid less than this amount. There are certain businesses that cannot pay that rate. So therefore, they will not hire you. So this bill or this, this voter initiative, really, was a way to create more unemployment, primarily for young, young people. That's really what this is doing, and so we're making some modifications, some commonsensical modifications to what the voters brought forward to make this work. If I asked the question, everyone who voted-- or who has spoken against LB258, if you'd stand, and then I'd say, those of you who have not owned a business and made a payroll, please sit down. Most would sit down." If I went further and said, those of you who are still standing, do you own a business that employs more than the minimum amount needed to comply with this particular initiative? More people would sit down. Ultimately, you would only have a couple people standing. So, I always find it interesting when people who make a payroll and know what it's like to make that payroll, employ people, do something noble, create taxes, tax revenue for the state of Nebraska. What is so bad about being someone who employs someone, pays them a fair wage for what they bring to the table, what is so bad about that? Why do we need to punish those businesses that are out there that are paying wages? I continue to think about what happened when the pandemic first hit. We found that McDonald's was having to raise their rate of pay. We were having trouble hiring tellers because they were being paid more to go to McDonald's. We did raise that wage.

QUICK: Time, Senator.

JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam President.

DeBOER: Thank you, Senator Jacobson. Senator Hansen, you're next in the queue.

HANSEN: Thank you, Madam President. I want to touch on a couple things. I believe it was Senator Dungan who mentioned a couple things.

I was hoping to ask him a question, but he's not here right now. But he was talking about the idea that raising the minimum wage doesn't necessarily lead to more unemployment, whereas it might actually stimulate the economy and actually lead to more employment. And he's-- so I want, I want to touch on that a little bit here, and then maybe a counterpoint to that. Workers-- the argument typically is workers with higher wages have more money to spend, which boosts economic growth. When in reality, if businesses increased wages without increasing productivity, they must compensate for these costs by things I have mentioned before-- raising prices, which is a big part of inflation, cutting jobs or hours, moving jobs overseas or out of state. Studies show that increased wages often lead to price hikes, which erodes the purchasing power of workers. A 2022 Quarterly Journal of Economics study found that-- and I have mentioned this before-- every 10% increase in the minimum wage leads to a 0.4% increase in restaurant prices. Again, we're not talking about the \$15-an-hour minimum wage. We're already there. This is the exponential growth of the minimum wage throughout the course of time with the CPI portion of this bill. When California raised its minimum wage, fast food and grocery prices went up, disproportionately affecting low-income consumers. Small businesses, which operate on thin profit margins, often can't absorb higher labor costs and either lay off workers or close down. A wage increase loses this benefit when the cost of living rises along it-- alongside it. Like I was mentioning before, a lot of us have noticed and we've heard in the news and everywhere else, do we have more money in our pockets, but we can afford less. The question is, why can we afford less, not how much more money we have in our pockets, but why can't-- why, why is it worth less? Labor cost is a big portion of that with inflation. Would Senator Dungan yield to a question, please?

DeBOER: Senator Dungan--

HANSEN: Good timing. Thank you, Senator.

DeBOER: Senator Dungan, will you yield?

DUNGAN: Caught me as I was walking by. Yes.

HANSEN: Yeah. Thank you. So you, you, you said something when you were on, on the mic earlier. We're not talking about anything astronomical about increasing worker pay. How high should minimum wage be in Nebraska? \$20, \$30, \$50? How high would you not go?

DUNGAN: It's a good question. I was actually just speaking with Senator Hughes about this and the difference between a minimum wage

and a living wage. I guess I'm of the opinion that the minimum wage should be a living wage. I think there are some people who do live on a minimum wage. And so, based on some of the data that I was able to pull in just short research, I would say anywhere between \$19 to \$20, depending on the county, is a living wage, so I guess I would propose that.

HANSEN: OK. So you're opposed to going \$50 an hour.

DUNGAN: I think I would be opposed to \$50 an hour. Yes.

HANSEN: Why would you be opposed to \$50 an hour? What would happen if you did?

DUNGAN: Well, I think you always have to balance costs, and I think you have to balance, like you said, business expenses. And so, I think, you know, the concerns that some people have with regards to the overall cost to bottom line can be valid, because you're, you know, saying \$200 an hour or something like that, there are certain businesses that might not be able to afford that. So I think that the complaints when we're talking about minimum wage in general that we hear about bottom line can be taken into consideration, but what we're talking about with this bill, obviously, is walking back the vote of the people, which is a different conversation. So--

HANSEN: OK.

DUNGAN: I think living wage is a good baseline to start with.

HANSEN: OK.

DUNGAN: But obviously, we can have the policy discussions moving forward.

HANSEN: All right. Thank you for answering my questions. I appreciate it.

DUNGAN: Yeah.

HANSEN: The idea-- and this is a conversation we've been having, the idea of a living wage, right? Living wage sounds fair, but wages are not arbitrary numbers. They are based on a worker's productivity, skills, and market demand. Again, that's a whole thing that makes up labor costs and labor force, inflation. And again, one of my favorite guys, Milton Freeman, said that forcing wages above market value discourages employers from hiring less-experienced or lower-skilled

workers. You know why they won't hire people at \$50 an hour? The reason they don't is that it would cause massive unemployment. The best way to increase wages and to increase worker productivity through education, job training, and economic growth, and not government mandates. And again, another thing that Senator Dungan had a question about is what else can we do besides increasing minimum wage? And he also mentioned the EITC, the Earned Income Tax Credit. The EITC is a targeted wage subsidy that benefits low-income workers without forcing businesses to cut jobs. And studies show that expanding the EITC credit does more to reduce poverty than raising the minimum wage. We tried passing this 2 years in a row.

DeBOER: Time, Senator.

HANSEN: The people who are against this bill killed the EITC credit increase that we tried the last 2 years. Thank you, Madam President.

DeBOER: Thank you, Senator Hansen. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Madam President. We didn't kill the EITC tax credit. We didn't vote for a package that had a lot of really bad and harmful things in it and weren't going to be bullied into voting for it just because it had the E ITC tax credit, but thank you for that. Would Senator Ben Hansen yield to a question?

DeBOER: Senator Hansen, will you yield?

HANSEN: Yes.

M. CAVANAUGH: Sorry, I said Senator Ben Hansen. Old habit from our first 2 years.

HANSEN: Yeah, I get it quite often, so.

M. CAVANAUGH: OK. What do you think is the hourly wage that somebody should earn and qualify for, say, SNAP? How much money should a family of 5 make and qualify for SNAP?

HANSEN: I don't know. I've nev-- like--

M. CAVANAUGH: Just your feeling, your thoughts.

HANSEN: Well, I think that's multi-factorial and I have to think about it. I can't give you like a straight answer right now. I'd have to

actually stop and think about it and run the numbers and figure that out. I haven't thought about that pertaining to this bill.

M. CAVANAUGH: A family of 5 qualifies for SNAP if they make \$24 an hour or less, and that could mean 2 people working in the household. So my point is, when we don't do minimum-- not even livable wage, minimum wage, we are subsidizing employers to pay their employees less and then get government benefits. We did this with the tax incentive bill that was in LB1107, which is one of the reasons that I opposed it, is that the Legislature and the people that were proponents of it, the tax incentives, refused to put in a base pay for employees that would put their employees out of the bracket for-- I'm sorry, Senator Hansen. That was my question. So yeah, thank you. Thank you for answering it. But so base employee, they wouldn't-- we couldn't put in-- and at that time, I think I was asking for \$5 and-- or not \$5. Sorry-- \$15.25 to be the base that an employer could pay their employee and get tax incentives. Because back in 2019, that would have been a good-paying job. And they refused. So we double-subsidize employers who get the tax incentive of the Imagine Act, because we refuse to just put that own protection for our budget, for our taxpayers. And not increasing minimum wage means that people who qualify for minimum wage or whose jobs are minimum wage, we are subsidizing those employers to pay their staff less and qualify for public assistance, and then we vilify them when they qualify for public assistance when we are the ones who are perpetuating the system of allowing them to be underpaid so that they qualify for public assistance. That's it. We don't need to do that. This doesn't even help. \$15 an hour? If that is a, a mom, a single mom with 4 kids, \$15 an hour, she would be probably almost qualifying for TANF, at that point. By the way, TANF is literally for the most poor of the poor Nebraskans. It is 50% of poverty. People on TANF make less than we do, less than the Legislature. Yet, we can't move a TANF bill out of the Health and Human Services-- or what does Senator McKinney call it? Harm and-- "Health, Harm, and Suffrage." Do you think the health part should still be in there? No. No, I don't either. So what are we doing? I've, I've been doing the math on what the university contributes in income taxes annually, because we are squabbling over giving them even a COLA raise, cost-of-living adjustment. Typical CO-- the, the increase in Nebraska for 2025 is 2.5%. That's the cost of living adjustment in Nebraska. And the university is being told either take a negative 2% cut or take a 1% increase, but we're not gonna give you even a baseline. What are we doing, Nebraska? It seems like we are screwing over poor people. That's what it feels like to me, and it is exhausting.

DeBOER: Time, Senator.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

DeBOER: Thank you, Senator Machaela Cavanaugh. Senator Dorn would like to recognize 13 fourth grade students from St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Beatrice, located in the north balcony. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Raybould, you're next in the queue.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Madam President. You know, I, I keep talking about Groucho Marx all the time, and his quote, like, who you gonna believe, me or your own eyes? And I know we talk-- we've been talking a lot about some of the unintended adverse consequences. I know Senator Jacobson spoke about it. Senator Hansen has been speaking about this, that sometimes there are some dramatic job cuts going on, or how do businesses actually absorb any type of inflationary increases? We talked about raising prices on their consumers. We talk about replacing employees with machines or by reducing the hours that the employer-- employees work, which in some cases, could mean that the workers make more per hour, but then actually less per week. And when I say, you know, look around you, look at all the national chains. I can just speak of Lincoln, Nebraska, that in the neighborhoods that I shop in that have just recently closed within the last 4 or 5 months. Big Lots has closed and filed for bankruptcy. Joanne's has filed for bankruptcy, for all those arts and crafts people. Some of my favorite restaurants, Red Lobster has filed for bankruptcy. They closed in Lincoln last year. TGIF has filed for bankruptcy. Hooters has filed for bankruptcy. So this is a, a-- an indication of there are things going on in our economy that somehow are related to inflationary increases, and not just-- we're not just talking about labor-wage increases, there is a whole number of factors. But these are what businesses do and decide when it comes to how do they look forward and take care of their operations, and how can they continued to show improvement or even maintain a bottom line. So these are real-life circumstances, and I continue to ask you to reach out to your daycare centers. We talk about affordable childcare all the time, and they're struggling, and they have been struggling to rebound since the pandemic, with additional compliance and regulations. So it is, it is concerning that we, we seem to not think of those things that are right before our own very eyes. And also, automation. If you go to order fast food, you can do it either via communication or you can just punch in your order on the menu board and you drive through. We're seeing that. You go to Michael's, my other favorite arts and crafts store, everything has become automated.

They might have one person managing 4 or 5 self-checkouts. So you're seeing dramatic response to either labor cost increases or your overhead cost increases, whatever. But you're seeing a dramatic response in our economy and in our retailers throughout our state. So I'm gonna jump back to the numbers because I love numbers. And I know somebody had raised a good question, like how are you getting these numbers? And I have to tell you, I am a statistical wonk about these things and I love it. I looked at the mean, median, and mode, and I'll define all those 3 things. How did I come up with 1.5% annual increase and why is it important? So we've talked about inflationary periods and outliers. So just to throw one out there, 2022 national average was 9.1% in cost-of-living increase. The state of Nebraska had 6.5. Last year, it had 3.1. Now when I'm talking about coming up with that number that is a reasonable number on stable years, where we didn't have that great influx or increases in inflation. And I focused on the-- a decade, 2010 through 2020. And I took all those CPI from the Midwest and I did the mean-- the mean is the average of it-- and then I-- the mean came out to 1.49%. The median came out to 1.5%. And the median is the middle number and you rank them in order from the lowest to the highest number in all the years that you're evaluating, and the median is the one in the middle. The mode is where you see the most common number come up, and that's the one that you focus on. And so the mean, the average, was 1.49%, the median was 1.50%, and the mode was 1.50%. So that is why that was the basis for coming up with the increases plan for the minimum wage after we hit \$15, 1.5% annual increase. The training wage annual increase is 1.5%, and on the youth wage, 1.5% increase every 5 years. So that was the, the magic behind the numbers that I would love to talk about some more, and that's why we tried to come up with something that is fair and reasonable.

DeBOER: Time, Senator.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, ma--

DeBOER: Senator Spivey, you're recognized.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Madam President. And good afternoon, colleagues. Again, I rise in support of the bracket motion by Senator Conrad, and against LB258, with the, the carve-outs and as presented, as well as the amendment from Business and Labor. I wanted to reiterate something that I said earlier, before addressing some additional comments, that there are other states that have had carve-outs specifically around youth, and the impact that they talked about and what happened. And so, in New Jersey, they specifically wrote and, and kind of did like, a, a memo brief of like, hey, here's what you can learn from what

we've done. We've, we've been on the track of minimum wage way before some of the kind of wave of momentum and, and the \$15, and, and they talked about, again, them having numerous carve-outs for farm workers, for example. and youth workers. And what they learned is and that they said that there's a common stereotype that young workers are simply using their earnings to pay for video games and movie tickets, but that could not be further from the truth that young people are seriously contributing to their family's income, especially when you're talking about families that are middle- to lower-income, in general. For teen workers who come from families that earn less than \$50,000 per year, they contribute \$9,300 on average or 18% to their family's income. For families of color, teen workers contribute \$9,600 on average, or 19%. So again, I think that there has been some conversation around our perspective around minimum wage, in general, and what does that look like. And again, we are past that point. And what this bill is looking at is specifically the youth carve-out with the training wage. And again, there is data and case studies from states that have said it is a bad idea to have a youth carve-out, and this is why. I wanted to address just some comments around for folks that have, you know, are signing checks for employees and employing people and so I run a small business and we have like 2 to 3 employees depending, but I run a nonprofit. And a lot of times, people think that nonprofits are not businesses and we are. The difference is our tax status. And it's actually harder to run a nonprofit because you don't have earned revenue in the same way. I can't create a service and have this earned revenue and shift my model. My income and my revenue looks very different, but I have a \$3.6 million budget and 18 staff that I'm responsible for. I still have to make payroll, I still have to provide benefits, while also adding to and advancing my mission, which again, my bottom line is more centered in people versus the dollar amount. And so with that, at my organization, we actually start people 10% over the median or average salary for that industry, when you look at their salary bands. And we did that for a number of reasons: Because we employ a lot of women and we know the pay equity gap, when you look at the amount that women make compared to our male counterparts; and I employ people of color. And we know that the pay-equity gap is exasperated when you add in layers of gender identity and racial orient-- and racial identity. And so we intentionally made the choice to pay people more so that they can take care of their families. And then again, I see the return because they are happier employees, they are committed to their work, and they're also, again, doing the things that they need to do for their families and what they hope to actualize. And so I think that sometimes there's this misconception that people don't understand or why we oppose a

bill that we don't know what it's like to write a check. We don't know what it's like to be able to have to make payroll, and that's not the case. I've done it in numerous types of industries and it's difficult, and, and we all have to make a choice if we choose people over profit. At our small restaurant, it's family-owned and operated. We employ people from the community. We give people second chances that maybe are system-impacted and we have always paid in general from when we started almost 5 years ago, over \$12. And now we have aligned with minimum wage, because we know that even though the, the floor is \$15, it's still not enough to take care of their families. And so the one thing that I just want to leave with that I think is most important for people that are watching, as Alice Walker says, the most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any. And we have power in our second house. The community has power. Keep speaking, keep writing your senators, and keep holding us accountable. Thank you, Madam President.

DeBOER: Thank you, Senator Spivey. Senator Guereca, you're recognized.

GUERECA: Thank you, Madam President. Good afternoon. It's a little dark in here today, but that's all right. So colleagues, I rise in support of the bracket motion and in opposition to the underlying bill of LB258. You know, I, I really do want to talk about the caps that are proposed to the, the increases in the minimum wage, but I, I just get stuck on the carve-outs for the young workers and who it affects the most. I think the number that got tossed around earlier and I, I could be mistaken, was that the reduction from the baseline minimum wage to the training wage, I believe is the term that's being tossed around, was a mere \$1,300. Now, I'll bet all the money in my pocket that for a lot of folks in this body, \$1,300 wasn't the difference between paying rent over the course of a year and, you know, being out on the streets or being able to pay your bills and not being able to, but that's, that's the reality for so many Nebraskans, not just in my district, but in every single corner of the state. Like I said, when, when we, when we press that green or red button, that's, that's who I want you to picture. Picture Nebraskans that work every single day, but because of their circumstances, can't make more than that minimum wage. That's who we're most affecting. That's who most-- who is most impacted by these small changes that we think, to us, doesn't add up to much. But when you're in that situation, that extra \$1.50 or whatever it may be could be that difference, that difference between making sure your child eats and you don't. And that does something. When you're unable to provide for your family and you're in the most desperate levels of poverty, it, it affects your, your dignity. When I ran for office, like I said, I wanted to make sure that if you worked

hard, you had that opportunity to provide a good and dignified life. Dignity. Dignity. It's a word that doesn't often get said in this Chamber, but that's, that's what folks need to realize that a \$1.50 here and a \$1.50 there could provide a level of dignity for someone that otherwise wouldn't have it. Like I said, I want to talk about other aspects of this bill, but I just keep getting stuck on that. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, colleagues, I rise in support of the bracket motion and opposed to AM272 and LB258. I've heard some of the conversation folks were having. I, I heard Senator Raybould go through her analysis of the-- how she came to the 1.5%, which I've spent a lot of my time talking about my problem with the 1.5%. And I actually did do a little of my own math, you know, for fun, on some of this. And the-- one of the problems-- I have several problems with the 1.5%, but one of them is that it's, it's the maximum, so 1.5% or CPI. And CPI has been, in those years, sometimes below 1.5%, and even once, it was negative, meaning that if you had 1.5% or CPI, that means you're only going to get the benefit of the-- you get the benefit of the lower one. So if CPI is 8%, which it was in 2022, the year this ballot initiative passed, you would only get 1.5%. But if it was negative 3% or negative 0.3%, which is what it was in like, 2018 or 2016 or something like that, then the minimum wage wouldn't, wouldn't grow at all. You wouldn't get the benefit of the 1.5%. So I think that is fundamentally just-- that's not a right-- good way to do this because it is never giving the benefit of the-- of growth, it's not keeping up with inflation, and things like that. Additionally, I have a problem with the 1.5%. I, I feel like Senator Raybould-- I think that's a reasonable articulation of an idea. I disagree with it. But if you're going to do that, I don't know why you stop at 2020 and not go to 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, where CPI grew by as much as 8%, and somewhere in the range of 4% a number of times, which, if we were having this debate and a conversation where we said, OK, well, let's use the last 5 years or the last 10 years instead of 10 years ending in 2020, it would be a much higher number than 1.5%. So I just think that's a-- it's almost-- it's arbitrary, really, to pick from 2010 to 2020 or whatever-- I, I seem to have misplaced that paper-- but to pick that range to put as-- to come up with this 1.5%. I think if you wanted to be more faithful to the intention of the voters, if you're trying to be some kind of-- put some constraints on it, you would take into account and consider those most recent 4 years, which-- including the one where, if someone were a voter in this election in 2022 and said, I'm thinking about how I'm gonna vote

on this and it says we're pegging the minimum wage to CPIU Midwest, you might Google it, and what you'd come up with is 8% when you Google it. 8.1, I think is what it was. You would see that, and say, whoa, man, I'm-- yeah. I'm going to vote for that. I want it to go up by 8.1-- I want it to go up this way and then I want it to go up 8.1% every year. And so I think that faithfulness to the voters is certainly important, but I think having just a rational argument that's act-- having a rational argument is good; having a rational argument that's actually related to the data and the facts, I think, is also important. I heard Senator Jacobson, again, going-- talking about what we talked about a lot on the paid sick leave bill, which was the fact that we have the ability to make these changes. And I haven't retread that territory, because I know we all talked about it a lot on the minimum-- the paid sick leave bill, but I do think it bears repeating that what happened was the voters voted to increase the threshold, because they did not want the Legislature to make the changes. So they said, we're going to make ballot initiative changes, but we don't want the Legislature to upset those changes. And so the voters put in statute a change-- or in the constitution, sorry, a change that would limit the Legislature's ability to upset or change the ballot initiative language. I'm gonna run out of time. Sorry. I didn't even get to what I really wanted to talk about. But so, yes, we have the power. The question is whether we should exercise it, and we should be very careful about exercising it because the voters have spoken, not only on this ballot initiative, but on previous constitutional amendments, which as Senator Jacobson pointed out, take a higher threshold to get on the ballot, and take-- so that-- they have emphatically spoken that they do not want us, once they speak on the ballot, they do not us to make changes, especially not eroding what they spoke to. They gave us that power in the event that there was necessary tweaking or changes that needed to be made, which we've talked about. There were some necessary changes proposed by the proponents on the ballot initiative for sports-- or for casino gambling that was taken up by this Legislature. So, there are-- we do have the power. We should be very careful about exercising it, because the people do not want us to. And so, I'll push my button and keep talking on this.

ARCH: Time, Senator.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Quick, you're recognized to speak.

QUICK: Thank you, Mr. President. And I'm, I'm enjoying this, this debate, listening to some of the, the senators speak about some of the issues that, that-- to address what we've got going on here. And I was-- I enjoyed listening to Senator Machaela Cavanaugh talk about, maybe, some of tax incentives that we've passed in year-- previously, and, and how that also affects, maybe, some of our, our workers in, in those areas that are also receiving assistance. And so I can remember when I was here the last time. I was-- it was Senator Kolterman had the Imagine Act. And actually, we had dis-- had been talking about the bill, and, and I asked him if I could be in on part of-- some of the negotiations, because we thought it was important to make sure that the, the wages were, were high enough to, to meet-- to help offset those tax incentives. And also, I thought it was also important that they also make sure that they provide the benefit of health insurance. And so, we did have some discussions with that. We had several meetings. I know the State Chamber was involved with those, with those meetings as well, and we had a lot of great discussions on that. Now, of course, many of those-- a lot of those wages within-- that were within that bill were higher than minimum wage, so those people, the, the employees who would be working at those facilities would actually be able to provide a, a, a way or a, a income that would provide for their families. Now one of the other things that happened within that when we were negotiating, there was also wages for Lincoln and Omaha area, versus maybe Grand Island, and so the wages were moved a little bit lower for the Grand Island area, which I, I didn't really agree with. I thought they should remain at least in a competitive-- at a competitive rate so we weren't losing employees from Grand Island area to, to a Lincoln or Omaha. And really, I, I think the cost of living isn't that, that much different, maybe somewhat different, but the housing in Grand Island is fairly high, and so, and so is the childcare cost, to have your-- have children within a facility, so. The other thing that we talked about, too, was just, just, just making sure those wages were at that respectable level, so that the-- those employees could actually take care of their families and provide that income level. I'll talk a little bit, too, about when-- actually, when I first started working right out of high school, one of my first jobs was working at a grain elevator, and I think I was pretty much near minimum wage. I was able to-- it was just me, so I would-- I managed to be able to provide for myself. But after my wife and I were married, I did get a different job, but it was still a pretty low-paying wage. I had to drive 30 miles every day to work. And I know it was tough for us to get by once in a while. During the winter time, I would get laid off. I would try to find some other employment to get us by through the winter. Sometimes there were jobs, and sometimes

there weren't. And then also, at, at, at some point during that time, I was able to work one day a week while we were-- while I was laid off, to, to help provide more income for my family. And I think there's a lot-- you know, we were fortunate. We did live pay-- live paycheck to paycheck, but we never had to apply for assistance. We probably could have at some points, but we really never had to. But there are those families that really need that assistance and really need that help. And these minimum wage jobs that are out there, I can guarantee you that they don't provide that wage to really benefit that employee or their family. and they need extra assistance. They're going to need that-- those SNAP benefits, or they're going to need the TANF dollars, or they probably will end up staying home to watch-- if they have children, they may have to stay home and watch their children versus taking them to a childcare, because their-- it's-- the cost of childcare is too high, and it's more than the cost of them-- that the-- it's more than they benefit, that they receive from their income. So, I know those are-- you know, un-- unless you've lived in that or, or walked in their shoes, I, I think it's hard to understand what they go through. I know there's been some talk about the employers and what their struggles are, but we also have to look at those employees who are out there and the struggles that they go through.

ARCH: Time, Senator.

QUICK: Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Dorn, you're recognized to speak.

DORN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listening to the conversation here this afternoon, kind of interesting to hear all of the different aspects of it or whatever the minimum wage, kind of like what we were talking about with the paid sick leave. Very interested. Try and look some of these things up, and 2022 is when we passed this initiative that raises the wage. And I think, I think maybe Senator Raybould's probably already talked about that. Because I thought it was in 2024-- not '24. I thought it was, well, earlier than that, but I-- 2022, we passed it, so this is making some adjustments to it. Wanted to just talk about one quick thing. Part of what we have here in the Legislature, in-- when we put ballot initiatives, not just from the Legislature, but from the people, when they collect signatures on the, on the ballot, we have constitutional amendments, which require 10% valid signatures of the statewide number that are elected-- or, or registered voters, which is 1,270,000, give or take. So that takes 127,000 valid signatures. If you do a statute, though, and that's what

this is, it only requires 7%, or about 89,000. So, a statute can be changed by the Legislature. It takes 33 votes, as we talked about the other day, to change that. A constitutional amendment, if that would have went that route, we couldn't have changed it. So this is a statute, so we get to have a discussion. We get to see if we want to change it or not. I think that's part of what we have as the process of the voting here in Nebraska. And I yield the rest of my time to Senator Ben Hansen.

ARCH: Senator Hansen, 3 minutes, 20.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, I kind of want to touch on a, a topic I left off right before we went to lunch, so I didn't get a chance to finish my thought. And it was the, the idea of the voters knew the in-- the intent of what they were voting for. I really do think they did. It's more the, the outcome, long-term, of what they're voting for, which is what Senator Raybould's bill is trying to address, in my opinion. So, just some numbers so people can kind of grasp the idea of what's gonna happen when we increase minimum wage by CPI every year, which is somewhere on the average, I think, in Nebraska, about 2.75-3%. In 2027, with 3%, we're looking at \$15.45. Within about 10 years, it goes up to almost \$21 an hour. So in 10 years from now, the minimum wage will be \$21 an hour And then 20 years from now, we're looking at almost \$30 an hour. Now, I can remember 10 years ago, it doesn't seem that long ago, 2014, 20 years ago, 2004. That doesn't seem very long ago. So 10 years from now, 20 years from now is not that far away. We're gonna be paying people \$21 an hour, minimum wage, and almost \$30 an hour, minimum wage. That seems like a lot to me. And when I talk about putting your thumb on the scales of small business, this is exactly what that does. One of the things I hear from opponents of this bill is that-- the idea that it's going to reduce poverty. I touched on this a little bit earlier. But many advocates claim that raising the minimum wage helps lift people out of poverty. But does it? The evidence suggests no. A 2019 study by the Congressional Budget Office-- I mentioned this earlier-- found that while a \$15 minimum wage might lift 1.3 million people out of poverty, it would also eliminate 1.4 million jobs. It's a part we have to consider that we don't ever think about. Yeah, people got more money in their pockets, but they're getting less hours, and we're-- and they're getting less-- and we're having less jobs. That's what the data shows. Moreover, most minimum wage earners are not the primary breadwinners of their household. We like to think of both people are on minimum wage, that's what all-- we're talking about here, and they can't survive, and that's the case, but not for as many as what people think. Typically, the person who has minimum wage is not the primary

breadwinner of the household. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 50% of minimum wage workers are under 25, and many live with family members who earn more. Minimum wage laws don't affect target pov-- poverty, because many poor families don't have working members. Raising the minimum wage does nothing for them, and if this doesn't sound like a regressive tax, I don't know what does. You know who can afford this? The big businesses and the corporations and the people who have money in the state of Nebraska. They can afford to pay their workers more than minimum wage. You know sometimes people who can't? Small business owners who have 2 employees, 5 employees. You know who can't live on minimum wage? The people who have both people working on minimum wage.

ARCH: Time, Senator.

HANSEN: Thank you.

ARCH: Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, colleagues. I once again rise in favor of the bracket motion and opposed to the underlying bill, LB258. And I wanted to touch on a couple of things that we've, we've sort of discussed thus far, but I want to make sure that I can just, I guess, round out part of the conversation here. So we've heard a lot about, you know, how much 10 years ago, 20 years ago things cost, what the wages were. It really is true, though, that over the years, prices of things have gone up. And I know that inflation exists, and as I said before on the mic, there's any number of reasons for that. But looking, for example, at average house prices, the average house price in 2005 was \$297,000 a year. The average price in 2015 was \$360,000 a year. The average house price of 2025 was \$419,200 a year. Prices are going up astronomically. And I wanna also make what I think is an important point, which is that the people that we're talking about here who are struggling to make ends meet aren't even thinking about buying houses. Right? They're trying to make ends meet to be able to pay rent. And rent has increased considerably, too. That's, that's the reality of the situation. But the folks that we're talking about, who are making minimum wage, who we're talking about what I should be making a living wage, these are people who just need a little bit money-- more money in their pockets to be able to afford groceries. Right? We're, we're talking about people who just need a little more money in their pocket so they don't have to think about what bills they're gonna pay on time that month, because they're worried they're not gonna be able to stretch it as far as maybe they were the month before. I think in this body, colleagues, we oftentimes

lose sight of a lot of those individuals, we lose sight of a lot of Nebraskans who are out there struggling day to day, and I think we lose sight of the bigger picture. And I understand the concerns that have been raised about the overall, I guess, impact on small businesses. I would add that there are certain small businesses, very, very small businesses that I believe are exempt from paying that minimum wage. And at the end of the day, I think that we, as a body, can have policy discussions about what is and what isn't correct when it is separate and apart from the vote of the people. And I guess I would respectfully disagree with Senator Hansen, when he says that the voters voted for an idea, but maybe they didn't know the impact of what they were going to vote for. I think the voters who voted for this knew exactly what they were voting for, because the ballot initiative for this back in 2022 was incredibly specific. It talked about the numbers that the minimum wage would hit in which years and where that would all go. So I do believe people voted for the actual plan, not just concepts of a plan, and I think that we should trust that the voters absolutely knew what they were trying to accomplish. I, I got a text a few minutes ago from somebody who pointed out that they, they find it very frustrating that the Legislature-- and I thought they worded this well. They're, they're very frustrated that the legislator-- Legislature is patronizingly shoving the voters to the kiddie table so that the so-called grownups who allegedly know better can do what they all know is right. And that's exactly the vibe that I think we're giving off right now, as a Legislature, which is, oh, it's so cute that you all voted. That's adorable. You don't get it. Let us step in and actually fix this, because we know best. And I find that patronizing to the voters. I find it hubristic for us to assume that we do, in fact, know better. As I've said before and I'll say again, we can have legitimate policy debates about whether or not we think something should be implemented as policy when we're having these bills back and forth. And if there was a bill before us today to discuss what we should set the minimum wage at, I would at least entertain the discussion back and forth in what I think would be a more legitimate dialogue, because it would be us coming up with that idea. But my, my underpinning of the objection here is that the voters have spoken, and this is part of a larger theme and common scheme and plan where we are walking back the vote of the people. And I don't think people appreciate that. Certainly, I don't think it's what people want. You know, we heard earlier that there was a, you know, a number of people that came in and testified in support of this bill. You can go to the website and you can pull up the testifiers list. And you can see the online comments. As of the time that this was printed, you have 5 people that were proponents, 296 that were opponents. 5 to

296. If the people didn't make their voice clear when they voted back in 2022, I think they made it clear when this bill was being heard. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Andersen, you're recognized to speak.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to provide a little clarification to some of the comments made earlier this morning. Senator Spivey started talking about TANF. I just want to clarify what TANF is. It's actually 165% of poverty. So if you look at what the current rate would be for a family of 4, it's approximately just over \$50,000 a year. Now, you figure their eligibility is for a total of 5 year-- or 6 years. So that means that they can actually-- will have over \$300,000 worth of taxpayer dollars. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh talked about SNAP, in which she referenced there not being a work requirement, and that's not true. The federal requirement-- there is a federal requirement for work in order to receive SNAP, SNAP welfare money. Nebraska has a blanket exemption to that, but the requirement still exists at the federal level. And then Senator Guereca talks about bootstraps, and people pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. But really what it means is they're picking winners and losers. They say that the, the winner has to be the employee, and will take the money out of the pocket of the small business owner, and give it to the employee to make them better. What I would say is the laws of supply and demand, you earn the wage that-- based on your experience and based on your knowledge. And with that, I'll yield the rest of my time to Senator Raybould.

ARCH: Senator Raybould, 3 minute, 30.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Senator Andersen. Thank you, Mr. President. You know, I want to respond to Senator Dungan's concern, you know, that the legislator thinks it's cute, that we can change what the ballot initiative measure was. But I just want to point out something that nobody has been talking about. So, on Initiative measure 433 that was voted on in 2022, 65 of the 93 counties in our state of Nebraska voted against increasing the minimum wage. 65 of the 93 counties in our state of Nebraska voted against increasing the minimum wage. That's 70% of the counties in our entire state voted against increasing the minimum wage. And so, I'm going to probably have the pages print out the initiative and you can take a look at your county. But since I have some time, I'm really happy to read the ones that have voted against increasing the minimum wage, the Initiative 433, in 2022: 1) Antelope, 2) Arthur, 3) Banner, 4) Blaine, 5) Boone, 6) Boyd, 7) Brown, 8) Buffalo County, 9) Butler, 10) Cedar, 11) Chase, 12) Cherry,

13) Clay, 14) Colfax, 15) Custer, 16) Dixon, 17) Dundy, 18) Fillmore, 19) Franklin, 20) Frontier, 21) Furnas, 22) Garfield, 23) Gosper, 24) Grant, 25) Hamilton, 26) Harlan, 27) Hayes, 28) Hitchcock, 29) Holt, 30) Hooker, 31) Howard, 32) Kearney, 33) Keya Paha, 34) Kimball, 35) Knox, Logan, Loup, Madison, McPherson, Merrick, Morrill, Nance, Nuckolls, Pawnee, Perkins, Phelps, Pierce, Platte, Polk, Red Willow, Rock, Saunders, Seward, Sheridan, Sherman, Sioux, Stanton, Thayer, Thomas, Valley, Washington, Wayne, Webster, Wheeler, York. So now, for the first time, I really understand why some rural communities feel like we are so out of touch with what they're thinking. So, colleagues, it's not so cut and dry as we all like to have everyone believe that we're not listening to our voters. Are we listening to all the counties? Granted, the number and the population in those counties is so much smaller compared to the eastern side of our state, but now I understand why they get a little disappointed and feel like you're not listening to us, and I think that's the same message that we're not being empathetic to what our rural communities are going through. Because they're the ones that see their grocery store get closed, they're the one that sees their floral shop close down, because they can't be competitive. They're the one that sees maybe their dental office close down, as well. So I wanted just to take a moment to share that with you, and I will go ahead and have the pages print it up so everyone can have the benefit of reviewing their own county. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Hunt, you're recognized to speak.

HUNT: Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, it wasn't a county election. It was a statewide election, and the ballot initiative passed. That's the beginning and end of the conversation. You're rising to talk about economic theories, business implications, to relitigate past minimum wage increases, to say-- to get other people up on the mic, Senator Hansen, say, well, what do you think the minimum wage should be? What should it be, then? It doesn't matter. It has no bearing or relevance to this conversation, other than you're just helping to take it 8 hours. While Senator Raybould asked us to shed a tear for the closure of the Hooters chains as a reason to pass this bill, it has no correlation to Nebraska's minimum wage, and she just wants us to forget the young people working at her store. None of these businesses she brought up-- which were bought by private equity, by the way, and are not small businesses-- have anything to do with Nebraska's minimum wage. Nothing. The voters of Nebraska already made their decision, and our only job now is to respect it. One of our colleagues, I won't say who, was saying, you know, it's really a lot to do this twice in one week, "this" meaning, you know, pass bills

that overturn the will of the voters. First, with the, you know, the modest but meaningful, as Senator Conrad says, increase to paid leave, and now a modest but meaningful increase to the minimum wage, which the voters voted for by a landslide. The Legislature is not above the people. We exist to serve them. And when the people speak clearly, as they did on the ballot, we are duty-bound to listen. The Nebraskans that voted, voted to raise the minimum wage. They voted for a specific dollar amount, for a timeline, and they voted for those increases to be tied to the cost of living so that the law can keep pace with economic reality. There were no carve-outs. There were no exclusions. There was no fine print. That's it. The end. That's all that matters. It doesn't matter what I think the minimum wage should be, doesn't matter what happened in other states, doesn't matter what Hooters is doing. This is all distraction from the point. And Senator Hansen, numerous people who have been speaking in, in support of this bill, the time for you to make these points about economic theories, about fair wages, about what other states do, was before the ballot initiative. How, how much money was spent to oppose the ballot initiative? Where were you guys knocking doors and handing out flyers and getting people to sign, you know, competing measures? There was no effort put into defeating the initiative that was meaningful. So what they want to do instead is turn around-- you know, the business, you know, community, the, the people who support overturning the will of the people, they know that they've got stooges in the Legislature who will undo all of it. You know, you can compare it to the, the abortion ballot initiative. We had one that would protect the right to abortion. We had one that would ban abortion, and the ban won. Now, if the Legislature was a little different, maybe we'd be working in here to undo that, but that's not going to happen. You cannot pick and choose what you're OK with the voters doing, based on how it serves your personal business interests. And I have never seen such a blatant, bald-faced, self-serving, self-dealing, selfish, unethical example of self-dealing as this bill in the Legislature, openly. The people did not vote to create a second-tier wage for people. They did not vote for young people to be paid less. Should we have an amendment to say that older people should be paid less? You can make all the same kinds of arguments about why they're worth less money to the labor market, but no one is making those arguments because nobody wants to discriminate against older people, just younger people. Voters didn't vote to cap future increases at an arbitrary number below inflation, and they didn't vote to hand this body the authority to water down their decision, no matter what Senator Raybould says. This bill overrides the public, it does not improve policy, it second

guesses the electorate, it's insulting, it's self-dealing, and it's unethical. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Fredrickson, you're recognized to speak.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, colleagues and Nebraskans watching. So I have a couple thoughts. I just want to remind folks of a couple things, especially after Senator Raybould's comments. So the reality is the way-- just a bit of a refresher on civics. The way elections work is the majority of votes wins. So the majority of Nebraskans voted for this. Further, when it comes to paid sick leave, every single legislative district voted in support of paid sick leave, including 89 counties. So I would like to see some consistency in Senator Raybould's argument, because she voted to water that down, as well. There's been a lot of talk about ballot initiatives here, and there's been some folks saying things like, oh, well, whoever writes the biggest check can just get all these things. I, I also want to remind folks, it is very difficult to get something on the ballot. It takes a lot of work. You have to collect a significant amount of signatures of registered voters to qualify for the ballot. You oftentimes have to collect way more than what's required because of the amount of signatures that get thrown out. And then in addition to that, you have to win the election. So you get-- once you get placed on the ballot, you have to get the majority of votes. So this implication that some big-wig donor just comes in and writes a check and then all of a sudden Nebraskans are persuaded to pass something like minimum wage or paid sick leave, this is significant grassroots effort that has been given by a number of Nebraskans. And again, we're seeing more and more initiatives in here, because after advocating their Legislature for years and years and years on these issues and these concerns and we haven't been listening to them, the constituents and Nebraskans have responded by making grassroots efforts and passing these significantly, in many cases, in landslide numbers, and that is a direct response to a Legislature that is very much out of con-- out of touch with the citizens that it represents. I also want to quickly say that we need to be, I think, a little careful what we wish for in here. Because we can continue to pass these bills that go against what the ballot initiatives were, but we also, colleagues, are going to risk referendum, and potentially, subsequent ballot initiatives or even constitutional amendments. I have no doubt in my mind-- and we saw this with the school voucher referendum. We saw signatures collected for LB753. Then we saw a new bill passed the year after that, and then signature collection as a referendum on that right afterwards. Voters are energized. Voters are motivated to ensure that their desires and their will is sought

through. And when they are successful on the ballot and when we ignore that success in here and pass legislation that undoes what they are asking, they have shown us that they will continue to advocate and continue to fight for what they want. And that's actually pretty inspiring when you think about it. That shows the grit of Nebraskans. It shows that they are going to continue to advocate for what they believe in, what they want, and they have told us with these initiatives and they've shown us, again and again and again, what they want. Senator Cavanaugh spoke to this a little bit earlier and there's been some discussion about what the appropriate minimum wage is, and I don't want to get in the weeds with that per se, but I do want to, again, underscore, without appropriate minimum wage being paid by companies, we, as a state, end up subsidizing these companies. So if someone is making \$12 an hour, or if a family of 5, both parents are making \$12 an hour, \$24 an hour total, they would still qualify for SNAP as a family of 5. So we, as a state, are going to be subsidizing that income because that business decided not to pay a minimum wage or a wage that is, that is livable. So, again, this is gonna come out of property tax relief. We need to think big picture here, about who's responsible for this and who's gonna be stuck with the bill at the end of the day. If we wanna continue to let business off the hook, the state of Nebraska is going to continue to be responsible for the bill at the end of the day, and that's going to jeopardize our ability to, to actually provide substantial relief to our constituents in the form of property taxes or whatever other relief we can provide. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator McKinney, you're recognized to speak.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of the bracket motion. You know, this has been a long week, and it's only Tuesday. It's crazy. But neither here or there. First, I wanted to define a term for individuals who don't know what the term means. So, because people don't know what it means, the term diaspora, I'll define it for you. The term diaspora refers to a group of people who have spread or been dispersed from their original homeland to other places around the world. It often describes communities who maintains connections, cultural, emotional, or political to their place of origin. For example, the African diaspora refers to people of African descent living outside the African continent, often as a result of slavery, colonization, or migration. I hope people took a note. Secondly, the conversation about picking winners and losers that was mentioned earlier, it's clear that people want to pick winners and losers, but they want those winners to be the businesses, not the people of Nebraska. They want to make sure that businesses continue to win while

people continue to struggle, and then you tell those people, no. We won't increase SNAP benefits. We'll try to cut those SNAP benefits. We'll cut, you know, basic needs from our state budget, those type of things. That's, that's, that's that frame of mind. And then, Senator Raybould, you want to point out all these counties across the state that didn't vote for minimum wage, but you failed to point out that your district, your district voted 75% in favor of raising the minimum wage. Your district did. My district voted 89%, but your district voted in favor of it, just to make it clear. And you talk about going against the will of the people. You're clearly going against the will of your constituents. That is a fact, and it's-- that, that can't even be denied. And I'm not going to vote against the will of my people because 89% of them voted for this. 92% of them voted for paid sick leave. It's just a frustrating week, a frustrating year of continuous legislation being put in front of us to work against the people of Nebraska, and we're just supposed to come back in here and smile, have a good day, say, hey, how's your day going? How's your morning going? Did you have a good weekend? Did you have a nice time with your family? Are you happy to be back here? I, I don't even know how to comprehend it. Like, people ask me, other senators that were here, like, how's the year going? I'm like, man, this is probably the worst time since I've been in the Legislature, and I'm not being-- and I'm not lying. This is the worst year since I've been in this place. I thought '23 was bad, but this might be worse. And I'm not even joking. We are literally spending days upon days working against the people of Nebraska, and we're coming, coming in here, acting like it's normal. It's just a, a sad theme, and we wonder why people don't believe in us. We wonder why don't people believe that change can be made. We wonder why people don't get out and vote. We wonder why people don't even expect us to do anything-- because we come in here and we work against them. That is sad. It's a sad state of affairs for the Nebraska Legislature that we have this bill and we have, have had other bills before us working against the people that we were elected to represent. It's really sad. Thank you.

ARCH: Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Again, good afternoon, colleagues. I agree with my friend, Senator McKinney. In 11 years in the Legislature, I don't know if morale has ever been this bad, including during the historic filibuster in 2023 that we came through together. And then, we worked so hard to reset balance and tone together coming out of that low point, and we had a constructive session together, last year. And that didn't mean I agreed with all of the policy choices that the body made-- far from it. But it, it was more

constructive, and it was more in alignment with our political culture. And the frustration that my friend Senator McKinney and myself and others are feeling is that you shouldn't have to explain basic civics to adult state senators. That, that-- that's at the underlying premise of all of these debates on sick leave and on minimum wage. And all of the tired arguments about giving modest but meaningful benefits to low-income workers, whether it's in the sick leave debate or here today-- again, these aren't government mandates. These are voter-initiated measures that you're seeking to undercut. The same tired arguments, they're always lifted up, they don't come to fruition. It's the, the same arguments we're, we're hearing about the minimum wage since it was adopted in 1938. We're, we're debating whether or not we should have a minimum wage. We've had that since 1938. I know a lot of you in this body want to follow the train of making America great again or taking our country back. You want to go back to 1937 in this instance, pre-minimum wage, or the public policy of Nebraska, pre-1967? Progress is never linear-- I understand that-- in public life. But it shouldn't be a dramatic clawback to the '30s and '60s. It shouldn't be a civics lesson to elected adult state senators that if they are honoring the will of the voters in terms of taking their seat in this body, they should honor the will of the voters whether they agree with it or not, in regards to workers' rights, health, and safety. The only other arguments we've heard thus far is that the only way to help the poor is to hurt the poor. Again, see the comment about the Dickens novel. And you know what? There are plenty of things that we can do to work together to make Nebraska's economy continue to thrive and to ensure that our vibrant business landscape remains vibrant. And when Governor Pillemer and a majority of this Legislature were trying to drive a stake in the heart of manufacturing and ag with increased taxes, guess who stood up for the business community and consumers and said no? Myself, Senator Dungan, Senator Cavanaugh. When Governor Pillemer and his allies in this Legislature sought to raid unemployment suit funds to balance the budget, who stood up and fought on behalf of businesses and workers? Myself, Senator Cavanaugh, Senator Dungan, et cetera, et cetera, in order to have a vibrant business environment. And Nebraska presently does, under the status quo. We have tens of thousands of open jobs. We're consistently on the list of the top 10 states to do business. We have right-to-work in our constitution. We have good schools. We have a strong work ethic. We have a favorable tax climate. Those are the ingredients for a vibrant business economy, not suppressing workers. Vibrant businesses don't need to suppress workers and force them to accept starvation wages. And they weren't crying out for you to do

that, either. There was a handful of comments that came in at the committee level. There was a--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

CONRAD: --handful of proponents. That's it. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Rountree, you are recognized to speak.

ROUNTREE: Good afternoon. And thank you, Mr. President. And good afternoon, colleagues, and all those that are viewing online today. I just rise today in support of the bracket motion, but I also want to just thank everyone for all of the great discussion and conversation that we've had on this particular bill, regarding the minimum wage. As I stated the last time I was on the microphone, I said that our constituents do follow what we're doing and they listen intently to the discussion that we're having, and I do take opportunity to respond to their inquiries and their comments. And so I just rise today to take this opportunity to read an email that I did receive from one of our constituents, so that their voice could be heard, Ms. Jessica Mascarello. And it says, hello, Senator Rountree. Just wanted to send a message to voice my opposition to LB258, as our young people deserve to be paid fairly for their work, many of whom perform the same jobs as people who are much older. There are young people whose wages are vital to their household, and denying them the increase in minimum wage that Nebraska voted for is unfair. I hope you will vote to oppose LB258 and to protect fair wages for teenagers in Nebraska. Thank you so much for the hard work you are doing to protect Nebraskans' rights. I'm happy to have you as my Senator. Of course, I responded back to her to say that we are standing strong and we want to hear the voices of our people. And her response back was: Thank you for reaching out. Young people deserve the same minimum wage as everyone else, as they are often performing the same types of jobs. Many young folks also work to contribute to their household, so raising their minimum wage will benefit their whole families. And so I just [INAUDIBLE] to read that into the record and let you know that our constituents all over Nebraska are watching and listening and reaching out. So Senators, when you receive these communications, do take an opportunity to respond and let our constituents know that we are here to represent them. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the rest of my time. Thank you so much.

ARCH: Senator Holdcroft, you're recognized to speak.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. President. Just wanted to-- first of all, I mentioned the other day that I, that I started working minimum wage, the minimum wage was \$1.65 per hour. And I really didn't work for that for very long, because after 6 months, I got a pay raise. And then, and then after that, I never, I never worked for minimum wage again. And my salary got larger and larger and larger, until I was elected to the Unicameral. And then it was-- now I'm working for way less than minimum wage. So another high note from the Department of Health and Human Service, who provides heating assistance to those in need. DHHS runs the Low Income House Energy Assistance, LHEAP [SIC], program, which helps low income households stay safe and healthy by providing financial assistance to offset heating and cooling costs. The Department, through LHEAP, assisted over 35-- 34,000 Nebraska households during the heating season. This assistance helped families avoid energy crises and maintain safe, warm, and healthy homes. Households currently receiving economic assistance benefits or with a pending case do not need to apply to receive F-- LHEAP. LHEAP can be requested online through a change report within the iServe portal. Individuals not currently receiving the economic assistance benefits can apply for LHEAP at <https://serve.nebraska.gov>. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Kauth, you're recognized to speak.

KAUTH: Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to actually draw the body's attention to Senator Tanya Storer, who today was awarded the Friends in Health Care Award, from Leading Age Nebraska. She was unable to be there. Her sister accepted it on her behalf. So I would just like to say good job, Tanya. And then with the rest of my time, I'd like to yield to Senator Raybould.

ARCH: Senator Raybould, 4 minute, 30.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you Senator Kauth. You know, I, I want to thank Senator McKinney and, and Senator Conrad. Yes, they remind me all the time how many voters in my district supported the Initiative 433. And I've, I've acknowledged that. I'm grateful for the, the votes that were represented by the-- given by the people that I represent. And I hear them. I know that they trust me. I have been representing them now for 15 years. And you know, I, I also want to thank Senator Conrad. I know she-- I'm sure it was just an oversight that she forgot to mention me as one of the senators that also fought against the sales tax increases that the governor proposed, because we know that they would hit our working families the hardest. And those are the ones that could least afford to pay for any type of sales tax

increase. It is also worth noting that, you know, Senator Conrad and myself were the only 2 senators, only 2 state senators that voted against the accelerated income tax rate reduction for the top 2 tiers of earners in our state of Nebraska, as well as corporations. We were the 2 only state senators who voted against us. And clearly, I would, would have benefited directly from both of those, and you know, I consider it part of our self-inflicted budget deficit. Because I think Senator Brandt, he has a bill out there that would have frozen the continued accelerated income tax rate reduction, and that's additional revenue that our state of Nebraska could sorely use right now, as we soon will be entering into budget discussions. And lastly, yeah. I think it's important that we acknowledge the counties that did vote against that, even though, you know, Senator Hunt pointed out the "captain obvious" that, you know, it was an overwhelming majority of the voters in our entire state of Nebraska. But to those counties, it matters, because they see what's going on in their communities and it matters to them. And that's why we should be open and receptive to hearing some of the concerns that I've tried to share from them, so that everyone understands that it does have an impact when we do things like this on employers. And yes, I've never been in a Hooters. And could I-- was I disappointed that they filed for bankruptcy? Not really, but what it indicates is some of these retailers are actually in your community. Like the Red Lobster in Hastings, that's closing. And of course, TGIF. and I'm sure some other communities have a Joann's in their community, guess what? They hired people in your community to work in their retail stores. And if you ask that person when they know that their, their store that they've been working at has filed for bankruptcy, you bet, that impacts them. That impacts their families. And so, to be so flip about it and not be considerate of the impact it has on those communities that lose some of these big box retailers as great employers should be considered. So I don't know if I'll ever have a chance, but I never gave my opening remarks about LB258. And I know I have one minute, but I'm sure there'll be another opportunity for, for me to discuss it. But I want to say that since the passage of Initiative 433 in 2022, Nebraska's minimum wage has increased annually by \$1.50 per hour and will do so again on January 1, 2026, when the wage reaches \$15 per hour. Beginning the year after that, the minimum wage is set to increase annually on the 1st of January at a rate based on 100% of the Midwest CPI as of August of the previous year. I'm not here to dispute the fact that the cost of living does increase year after year and do not argue that workers earning a minimum wage benefit from that wage growing over time. My intention with LB258 is to provide certainty to

businesses across the state who are required to comply with this mandate. To accomplish that, LB258 would establish a cap--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

RAYBOULD: --on the CPI. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. First, colleagues, I'd like to address some of the things that Senator Andersen mentioned on the mic. I never said that there wasn't a work requirement. There is a work requirement for SNAP in Nebraska. And what you were referencing, I believe-- I would ask, but I don't see you at the moment-- is the waiver that the state of Nebraska has. It's a hardship waiver for SNAP, and it is specific and very narrow, and it only impacts Senator Meyers' district. It is for the Winnebago tribe, and they do not have a work requirement for SNAP on the Winnebago tribe because of economic hardship. And Nebraska really underutilizes that specific waiver compared to a lot of other states. So to address the TANF, I think I heard 50k is what people get in TANF a year. Wow. I would love to know where that information came from. Because I've been bringing TANF bills for years now, and I-- based on what DHHS and advocates and information from government websites tell me, that's not the case, so I would love to know where that information is coming from. To qualify for TANF, you have to be 50% of the poverty level, so a single individual has to earn \$7,000, approximately, to qualify for TANF. And your payments for TANF are around \$300 a month, which means that you can get a maximum of about \$3,600 a year, a lifetime maximum of around \$18,000, lifetime maximum of TANF. And we have a TANF rainy day fund that just keeps growing and growing and growing and growing, and we refuse to increase eligibility or payments. So this is literally the poorest populations of our state that we are treating this way. And TANF also has a work requirement. I've been going through budgets and, and then more budgets, and then other budgets, and then going down rabbit holes of budgets. And I misplaced my sheet, but I was looking at the university budget, because we've been talking about the university in committee. And one moment, let me grab it. I got a lot of papers here. I don't-- I try to keep those cover paper-- when you print on the printer in here and it says, Senator blah, blah, blah, I always keep those backside for scratch paper. OK. So the university-- if we were to give the university-- do nothing, I guess. If we did nothing with the university budget, just held them neutral, which is essentially a decrease-- but the income tax, based on information I got from-- salary information on the university website, the income

tax that we get from the university annually is 300-- sorry-- \$236.1 million. That's almost the deficit that we-- manufactured deficit that we currently have on our General Fund appropriation. With a 2.5 increase, which is the COLA, cost-of-living increase, with a 2.5 increase we would get \$5.9 million more from the university in income taxes. And the university, to give them a 2.5 base increase would be \$71 million. So that's just the income tax that we would get from that one population. I see my time is almost up. I wanted to talk about the prison system and how we're missing out on \$400 million in wages there. No. I'm sorry. That was \$400,000. I think it's \$400,000. \$115 million in wages are not coming through because we don't pay the prison workers anything other than actual slave wages, and it is a slave economy. So, I think I'm just about out of time. And this-- the light just throws me off. Because when I hear "one minute," then I'm like, I know exactly, but then I see the light, and I'm, like, has it just come on? Has it been on this whole time? How much time do I have, Mr. President?

ARCH: 10 seconds.

M. CAVANAUGH: Oh, boy. OK. See? So when I started, it had just come on. So for my final 10 seconds, I will say I oppose LB258. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Jacobson, you're recognized to speak.

JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, last time on the mic, I talked a little bit about what I had witnessed so far. I want to comment on a couple things. We talk about taxes. This might be a good time to remind people that taxing is taking the citizens' money away from them and giving it to the state to pay for services. OK? It's our money. So when we talk about tax incentives, you're going to let us keep some of our more-- a little bit more of our money that you're taking away from us to begin with. Let's just make sure we understand that concept. It's our money that you are taking away. Let's talk a little about housing, housing costs. I understand. It-- it's been tough the last 4 years, to live through the last administration and the inflationary impact that that, that administration has had. We've also gone through a, a pandemic, and that's causing also issues. But the pandemic's over, folks. It's time for folks to go back to work. It's time for some of these pandemic-era subsidies to go away, and it's time to get back to normal. When we look at housing, yes, housing's gone up in price, largely because we had a shortage of labor and because we had a shortage of materials, and of course, the storms that have happened nationwide have added to that concern. Housing

costs have gone up. Guess what happens when housing costs go up? The cost of a new home goes up and then that causes the used homes to go on-- go up, as well. And then you start looking at apartment houses. If you rent that apartment and it costs more to build it, or because the new ones cost more to build, the-- those that are pre-existing go up in value, then your property taxes go higher. That's a novel idea. Your property taxes are going higher. And to be able to pay for that, your rent goes up. If you want to stop the hike in rents, we have to get property taxes down and we've got to be able to get things more under control from the cost of labor. So when we look at a bill like this one, we're making-- we're working around the edges to make improvements on the voter initiative. We're not repealing it, which we could, but we're not, we're not doing that. We're simply improving the bill. We're improving the initiative. That's what this bill's all about. So as I look at what's happened in the last 7 hours-- or I'm not sure if we've quite been 7 hours-- probably 6.5 hours, we've gone around in circles, talking about we can't change the vote of the people. Well, we can. And we talk, we talk about all of the horrible things that are going to happen, but we aren't talking enough about the fact that we're keeping people from coming to work. When, when the employer cannot afford to pay for that individual to come to work, they close the business in many cases, and then we do have people going back on state subsidies because the jobs aren't available. We have a need for the jobs, but we're not allowed by the government to hire people. I thought Senator Hunt put it very well when we were talking about the independent contractor bill a, a couple of filibusters ago, when she said, in her mind, the government should stay out of employer-employee relationships. Do you remember that? The government should state out of employer-employee relationships. I wholeheartedly agree. I wholeheartedly agree with that statement. This is a cleanup, a fix-it, if you will, from what the voters voted to do. And I can tell you that when we look out to the western part of the state, they're not expecting anyone to give-- to guarantee them a minimum wage. That's why we saw the difference in the voter turnout. So I thought the information that Senator Raybould was very appropriate to know that this was not everyone in the state believed that. With that, I will yield my time back, Mr. President.

ARCH: Mr. Clerk, for items.

ASSISTANT CLERK: Thank you, Mr. President. Committee on Enrollment and Review reports LB415 to Select File with amendments. Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee reports on the appointment of-- of appointments to the Nebraska Tourism Commission. Senator Raybould has amendments to LB258; Senator Conrad has a series of

motions and amendments to LB258; and Senator McKeon has amendments to be printed to LB646. That's all I have, Mr. President.

ARCH: Returning to the queue, Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And good-- I don't know if it's afternoon or evening yet, where we are in the day, but appreciate folks that are still watching online and engaging. People are really tuned in and dialed in. I'm getting real-life and real-time messages and emails from people that are watching and, and are looking at what we have in front of us and some of the conversation. I wanted to go back and visit-- and I appreciate that Senator Andersen is listening to my comments and I'm, I'm hoping that some of the frameworks and information that I have provided in response to some of his ideas around social drivers of health and economic opportunity are landing, but wanted to clarify my comment earlier. So Senator Hansen specifically spoke about like, poverty and what creates poverty and people navigating situations where they cannot take care of their families. They are needing maybe a social safety net service in, in that regards. And so what my comment was around is how do you end up with poverty. Like, what are the tenets of poverty, and then what are solutions that help drive people to economic sustainability? And so my reference to TANF was around people that can access TANF, because Nebraska has some of the tightest requirements-- which, he also introduced a bill that would make it even harder to get and utilize TANF-- is a system and solution to help people to self-sufficiency. We have also seen that different states adding in universal income, so where people are given money and they are trusted to take that money to help, again, create self-sufficiency. And so if we are going to have a conversation about poverty within the, the dialogue around LB258, I wanted to provide more insight around what does that look like from a social drivers of health and public health standpoint, around how you get there. And so, just wanna make sure that that's on the record, my comments about TANF, and that we have very differing approaches to what does it look like for people to access this resource, based on the policy that he has put forth this session. I also think that as we talk about research as it relates to this specific carve-out, and there has been lots of conversations about this bill and the work of what the ballot initiative looks like, and should we have a minimum wage, and a minimum wage is not a livable wage and-- which I think is all good context for the conversation. I specifically have been really clear that I support the motion by Senator Conrad to bracket and do not support the amendment, AM272 and LB258 with the carve-outs, because of the implications around youth,

and provided some case studies from New Jersey around what they saw with their carve-out. And again, research is research. We have seen from all the numerous handouts that people can provide research to prove their point. And I wanted to be clear around the research that was provided around the loss of jobs that there is other context that we have to look at. And so when you are thinking about research and people are making a decision to, one, look at the methodology, which has not been provided to us. And so, what was the control factor? What did they look at for that? Are these net-- job loss? Is it gross? Like, what does that mean? And then are these low-paying jobs that are now depleted and out of our industry and market because we have created a standard of what people need to actually survive, and the businesses are aligning to that. And so I think we need to, as we are getting all of this data, as I hope people are reading it and making informed decisions that we're really thinking critically about what is presented to us and not thinking about it on face value. I think Senator Raybould, you said, do you believe me or your nose or who do you believe, right? And so, I think that we have to think about-- did I get it right, kind of? The saying? Kind of close. And so we just need to look at the methodology, and again, and use that in context to make a really important decision that is in front of the body. And so I just wanted to continue to provide those points of clarity and appreciate the dialogue that we are having, and at this point, still stand in support of the motion that is in front of us and do not support LB258 or the amendment from Business and Labor, AM272. And I hope that we, as a body, can continue to support the ideas and the resources needed for some of our most vulnerable families and working families that really sent us here. And so, I know my time is almost up. I'm going to punch back in to talk a little bit about some of the emails and responses that I am getting, as it relates to this conversation in real time. Because I think it's important to continue to lift up the voices of the people that we should be representing and that we should keep in mind, when we have these really complex--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

SPIVEY: --and critical decisions in front of us. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, colleagues. I stand in support of the bracket by Senator Conrad and opposed to AM272 and to LB258. And I was just sitting here, having a conversation about the diff-- difference between this chart that was by county and the

chart by legislative district. And, you know, I think it-- there's-- it's an interesting thing if you wanna look and see how different breakdowns voted. Right. So if you want to look at your legislative district, it could be one thing. Like my legislative district, 80.1% voted for it, which would mean 19.9% didn't vote for it, or Senator Brandt's district, 40-- let's see. Senator Brandt, what number are you? There we-- 32. 48.6 voted for the ballot initiative, which means that 51.4 did not vote for it, so Senator Brandt's district did not vote for it. And then we have the county breakdowns, which is an interesting thing, the way, the way to look at it and as Senator Jacobson pointed out, not everybody voted for this. I would call your attention to the top line of the column, under 4, 386,756 against 272,603. That means Nebraskans of all stripes, all geographic determinations, all counties, all legislative districts, voted for this by a majority of a-- with a 114,153 vote margin. So 114,000, give or take, Nebraskans vote-- more voted for Nebr-- for this than voted against. That's pretty substantial, OK? So-- and you can slice and dice it by geography and all those things, but talking about respecting the will of the people based off of, you know, geography is always an interesting conversation. So I was, on my last time on the mic, talking about a number of things, but one of the things I did want to talk about is this respect for the will of the voters. And we've had that conversation a couple times, and Senator Jacobson gets up and keeps saying that folks are saying that we can't do this, but we really can. Nobody's saying we can't do this. People are saying we shouldn't do this. There's a distinction. So the voters have put this power-- well, the constitution originally put it in our hands. The people of the state of Nebraska made it harder for us to exercise the power. So that is a judgment, right? We're saying in the judgment of the people, they don't want us to do this. In the judgment of those of us who are speaking against doing this, we also agree with the people who passed this by a majority, and we are trying to stand in support and solidarity with those folks. So we've had a lot of conversation about this ballot initiative, about another ballot initiative. We haven't really talked this year about ballot initiative to repeal, or I guess it was a referendum to repeal the scholarships that this-- voucher, scholarship, whatever you want to call it, that this Legislature passed 2 years ago, that the voters resoundingly repealed at the ballot. And I was thinking about, I was talking to Senator Riepe about Sisyphus, right? So all of us, I'm sure, have some familiarity with Greek myth. And Sisyphus was a king who was a trickster, and tricked Zeus and upset all these people. And his punishment in the afterlife was to push a rock up a hill, and then as he got up to the top, it would roll back down, and he had to continue

to push that-- push the rock up the hill. So it's-- so I-- and I was thinking about that, in terms of the people of the state of Nebraska who are pushing up the hill, the rock, for minimum wage. You know, they passed the ballot initiative in 2014. And then they came back. You know, the ball, ball rolls back down because of the ballot-- they, they passed it and the wage went to \$9, but didn't keep growing. And then they push it back up in 2022, and it's starting to grow, and they think they've got it at the top of the hill. And now here's the Nebraska Legislature, pushing the rock right back down the hill so Nebraskans are going to have to start again, push the ballot, maybe push it back up the hill, based off of what we do here. So I feel that-- feel for the people of the state of Nebraska who have passed these ballot initiatives to raise the threshold, to raise the wage, to raise the wage and peg the wage to a higher increment to keep it growing, to provide paid sick leave for everybody, only to have the Legislature roll it right back down the hill. So this, this sis-- siso-- sis-- Sisyphean, Sisyphean, Sisyphean-- so I was talking to Senator Riepe, and said do you feel Sisyphean? And I said, no, I feel more quixotic in my endeavor here, because, you know, I'm always tilting at windmills, as it were. But anyway, so I thought that-- it's an interesting story. And I know, coming up next, you'll get some interesting points from my Sancho Panza, Senator Dungan, to my Don Quixote. We can talk more about that later on the mic. But again, I support the bracket motion, oppose--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

J. CAVANAUGH: --AM278 [SIC] and LB258. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Hansen, you are recognized to speak. Senator Dorn, you are recognized to speak.

DORN: Thank you very much. I was kind of in-- involved there, appreciate you and stuff. So, I think Senator Hansen was around here, but I don't see him right now, and stuff. I was going to yield him some time, and stuff. If Senator Raybould would like time, I will sure will yield him-- her some time. Senator Raybould, I'll yield time.

ARCH: Senator Raybould, 4 minutes, 30.

RAYBOULD: Yes. Thank you, Senator Dorn. Thank you, Mr. President. You know, I'll go back on my opening remarks that I never gave on LB258. So I wanted to just give you any-- some more foundational knowledge of how I came up with the numbers I came up with. So looking back, the average Midwest CPI over the last 50 years, 50 years is 3.87. The

5-year average is 4.1%. The increase in our minimum wage on January 1st of this year was 22.7%. While the Midwest CPI of August last year was just 2.6%. So you can see that we've done significant jumps, from \$9 up to now \$13.50, and then come January of 2026, we will be up to \$15. Now looking ahead, on January 1, 2026, there will be an increase of 11.1%, followed by the annual CPI increase going into effect in 2027. If the minimum wage were to grow by the 50-year average, in 10 years, the minimum would be over \$20 per hour. And I think Senator Jacobson had pointed that out, and Senator Hansen, as well. And in the next 10, we would cross over that \$30 per hour. Interestingly enough, 22 states and the District of Columbia have or will soon have automatic increases based on indexing. Of those, Minnesota and California have caps on that increase, like what we are proposing that we have an annual fixed increase of 1.5%. In 2022, inflation was the highest since it has been since the late 1970s and 1980. We established the national inflation rate. In 2022, it was 9.1%. Thankfully, in the Midwest, it was 6.5%. Many states unfortunately had-- that had tied their minimum wage increase to a CPI increases, they had larger than expected increases to their minimum wage rates that were really challenging for them to get through. And those 2 states were Maine and Ohio. And at this point in time, they're trying to figure out what is the appropriate mechanism to either cap it, like we're trying to do here, in our state of Nebraska, or look at some other appropriate indexing. The earlier time that I was on the mic, I came up with that 10-year decade from 2010-2020, and the reason why, that had less volatility than what we have seen from 2020-2025, and so that's the, the decade that I focused on, where we saw the CPI have a very constant level with very few variations, and so that's how we landed on that 1.5. For Ohio and Maine, that was significant increases for them that was tough for them to swallow. And as I mentioned, they're looking at taking steps to make corrections to that, so it's more predictable and reliable, and not so drastic of an increase. So we are very fortunate. We are an outlier in the Midwest CPI. And basically, in the calculations that I came up with, we're coming right in at the midpoint. And it's those unexpected jumps that have extreme impacts on employers. And you hear it about the stock market. We know the stock market has had tremendous volatility. And we have seen a lot of the stock prices just plummet in the last like, 3 weeks, and it's a little scary for those who have lots of investors. Most employers who are hiring at or just above the minimum wage are in industries that operate on razor-thin profits. We've talked about that. Increasing their costs forces these businesses to raise prices, reduce job and training opportunities, decrease benefits, or cut some of the services

that they provide. Thank you, Mr. President. And I'll just hop back on and, and continue with my opening remarks.

ARCH: Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. And colleagues, I do rise again in favor of the bracket motion and opposed to LB258 and the adjoining committee amendment. I just want to respond briefly to Senator John Cavanaugh calling me his Sancho Panza. One thing I take exception to there is certainly, I think Sancho in the novel is illiterate. I don't think I'm illiterate, but, you know, I understand. In addition to that, I would just like to comment, too. He said that oftentimes, it feels in here like he's being quixotic. And I think sometimes we all can feel like we're tilting at windmills. But I think the definition, as I understand it, for quixotic is often that you are being foolishly impractical, and I don't think that's what we're doing here. Certainly, it can feel Sisyphean, where you're constantly rolling the same boulder up the hill, especially in a session where we are having these debates over and over again, about ballot initiatives that have already been approved by the voters. But I don't think it is foolishly impractical to try to uphold the will of the people. And so, it can be a large undertaking and it can be a, a big task, but I don't think that it is foolish to do so and, in fact, I think it's important for us to actually step up and support the will of those voters. I understand we've been handed out this sheet as it pertains to the different amounts of votes in each county. My only response to that would be, that's simply not how these elections work. And when I talk to people about how vote-- voting works and about how elections work, you know, one of the things that people often lament is that we end up with people elected to the presidency who didn't win the popular vote. And people are upset about that. How could so-and-so be our president if a majority of the people in America voted against them? And it's frustrating, because a lot of people understand that at the end of the day, what I think should carry the day in a vote is what the majority of people voted for. And so, regardless of the breakdown of the individual counties in there, which, by the way, any number of these counties have a large amount of people who did support these measures, at the end of the day, the voters spoke. And this ballot initiative, as it pertains to minimum wage, was passed with almost 60% of the vote of the people. And so to not actually put that in place... or to try to walk it back or to undermine it, I think is problematic. And I would, again, respectfully disagree with Senator Jacobson's characterization that we are improving the bill. I can think of any number of people who collected signatures for this ballot initiative, who voted for this ballot initiative, and certainly the large amount

of people who are affected by this ballot initiative, who do not see what we're doing as an improvement. They see it as walking it back, undercutting the intention of the underlying vote, and again, saying to the voters of Nebraska that we don't respect where you're coming from. We don't respect that you voted for this and it's our job to do it. So to call it an improvement, I think, is a mischaracterization of what this bill does. And I will continue trying to support the vote of the people when it comes to supporting working families and when it comes to supporting people who are just trying to make ends meet. I also, I guess, was listening to the conversation I think that Senator Raybould was having about how some business practices or, or, I guess, conditions have led to various restaurants or other industries going under. And when you dig more into why some of these large restaurant chains, for example, have gone under over the years, it's more than just-- in fact, it's primarily not about increases in wages. What it's primarily about is, to put it bluntly, greed. Right. Let's talk about the restaurant chain, Red Lobster, which I love those cheddar biscuits. Don't get me started on those. But Red Lobster had to file bankruptcy, because you had large private equity investors essentially buy it up and then lease back the land to the franchises, and jack up the rent so much that a bunch of them had to go out of business. It was bad business practice and a desire to purchase this, and then create these unsustainable agreements with the underlying businesses that they had to go out of business. And now, we don't have a Red Lobster here in Lincoln, I'm pretty sure. And so, you know, it's, it's-- I think it's disingenuous, whether intentionally or not, to say that increases in wages are what has led to these businesses going under. Let's not also forget that the majority of people that we're talking about being employed, at least the front-facing ones, in these restaurants are servers, who get paid tipped minimum wage, often, so that's not even who we're talking about with this minimum wage bill. So colleagues, the folks we're talking about are the people who are struggling to make ends meet. It's the people who are getting back on their feet, for example, when they take a new job. It's the people who oftentimes are doing the work that goes unseen and often unappreciated on the day-to-day, but it's the people who need it the most. And so, I do think that we should make sure that this minimum wage reflects a living wage.

ARCH: Time, Senator.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Juarez, you're recognized to speak.

JUAREZ: Thank you, Speaker Arch. Well, I am finally taking my turn today to come on the mic and share some of my thoughts. And I wanted to start out talking about an event that I went to on Saturday night, because I really wanted to share this moment with my colleagues. I went to a Sarpy County Democrat Legacy Dinner on Saturday, and one of the speakers was Patty Pansing-Brooks, who spoke. And another speaker that was there was Senator Victor Rountree. And I wanted my colleagues to know that Senator Rountree was absolutely amazing. I just could not get over the fantastic speech that he shared with all of us. And I sat, you know, first table, right in front of the podium. And it was actually my first time to hear him speak beyond our little clips that we get to do here in the Legislature, so I felt that he really had a great opportunity to show his talents. And I-- I'm going to tell you, he definitely got a standing ovation for his speech. He was very inspiring, he was very, very motivational. You know, it really try-- he really tried to support how we need to move forward and for us to work together. So I-- my only regrets were that the media wasn't there to be able to capture the terrific message that he shared with us. And I must say, next door-- Congressman Bacon was next door, but I don't think that his applause was as loud as ours for Senator Rountree. So I just wanted to share something positive about his efforts. And I, I even thanked, thanked his wife, who was there that night, because, of course, he shared with her that he appreciates that she supports him in his role here, in the Legislature. So the points that I wanted to get started making today, because today is my first time up, was I wanted to discuss the votes by the legislative district on Initiative 433. Now I'm the kind of person who really does love looking at all these statistics and reviewing them, because many times, I am pleasantly surprised by them. And in my district, the percentage of supportive votes for 433 was 74.3 percent. Then, Senator Guereca, in District 7, he had 78.1% of supportive votes for the initiative. Megan had 77.4 for District 8. Senator John Cavanaugh of District 9 had 80.1%. Senator McKinney of District 11, he had 89.6%, and Senator Spivey of District 13, she had 74.6%. And then, Senator Raybould of District 28, she had 75 percent. So I wanted to share some of those statistics with everyone. And I wanted it to mention that back in November of 2022, nearly 58.5% of Nebraska voters approved Initiative 433. That included the support of 29 counties and 38 legislative districts. Before November of 2022, Nebraska's minimum wage was stuck at \$9 an hour, and that was for over 6 years. The initiative gradually and responsibly increased the minimum wage to the \$15 that we're talking about, per hour, by 2026. Now, this phased-in approach allows businesses to adjust while ensuring hardworking Nebraska residents can meet their family's needs. And I think that, you know, obviously, it's

a good approach for the success of our small businesses to be able to phase this in.

ARCH: Time, Senator.

JUAREZ: Thank you.

ARCH: Senator Hunt, you're recognized to speak.

HUNT: Thank you, Mr. President. I know that Senator Jacobson is smart enough to know the difference between the scenarios he was talking about, when I said on the-- I guess it was the Uber bill a while ago, introduced by Senator Hallstrom, where he wanted to classify Uber drivers and other ride share and gig workers as independent contractors, and put that in statute so that workers could not advocate for their own unionization or organizing, or anything like that. And I said, I think that the government should stay out of relationships between employers and employees. I do think that. You guys don't even know how I voted on this initiative, do you? The difference is, we didn't have, in my district, 75% of the voters come in and say, hey, Senator Hunt, I don't think that, that Uber drivers should be able to unionize, and Senator Jacobson is smart enough to know that. He knows the difference. If 75% percent of my voters came in, as they did, on this minimum wage bill, and said, we don't want Uber drivers to unionize, then guess what? I wouldn't be standing up here today, on April 1, 2025, at 4:30, trying to overturn the will of the voters. Do you guy-- you do know, you are smart enough to know, but you say things that make me wonder. I'm, I'm gaslighting myself. I feel crazy. You say things make me wonder if you get the difference between what we would like to do as a super-majority, conservative, Trump-supporting body versus what the majority of voters vote for, which is not for us to overturn or mess with. The majority of voters supported the minimum wage increase at the ballot box, and that's all that matters. Economic three doesn't matter, what, you know, people should get paid, what the cost of living, poverty index, none of that matters. And I'll tell you what, these voters are gonna be shocked to learn that what they voted for, what they organized for, what they worked so hard for, and what they won is now being undermined in the Legislature. A lot of voters supported the raise in minimum wage on the ballot, but they don't follow every single move that we make here in the Legislature. They're not tuned in, they're not, you know, necessarily reading the news every day, they are not looking at Twitter to follow the journalists to see what it is we're doing in here, because they have regular lives and they're busy. A lot of them have more than one job, they got more to do. And they're going to be

surprised if this bill passes that the things that they worked for has not been implemented and has fact been overturned by their Legislature. And frankly, I think that people need to be organizing now to boycott the businesses of senators who support this measure. They need to peacefully but persistently picketing the homes and offices and businesses of senators that support this measure because I think people should be angry about that. I think that the advocacy community and activists and people who work to stand up for their own rights, they aren't fighting back against elected officials like they used to, and I think it's time for us to get a healthy dose of that. Because if we're going to pretend that the public service that we provide here is about respecting the will of the people, we better start acting like it. We can't pick and choose which results we honor based on what's convenient for our personal politics or our businesses or our bottom lines. And Nebraskans need to wake up, hold us accountable, and realize that that's exactly what we're doing to them. Everything we do in this body is a reflection on whether or not democracy is working. That's what I think about every day. It's a reflection on whether the people believe that their voice matters, and whether or not we, as elected officials, are worthy of the trust that they place in us. That's what this is really about at the end of the day, is trust. Trust in our democratic institutions, trust in the process, and trust in the idea that your vote means something, even if it's inconvenient to Senator Raybould and others in power. I think it's time for the people of Nebraska to hold elected officials accountable. I think they need to be in the Rotunda. I think that they ought to be at our offices, our businesses, and I think it's time for advocacy community to take, you know, some of the oomph and the, the stamina that they had to pass this ballot initiative in the first place, because now it's time to step up and fight to defend it, because it's going to be taken away from you. We are debating whether the people's will has any staying power when it conflicts with the interests of people in power. It's time for Nebraskans to organize against that, and I'll be standing right there with you. Thank you--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

HUNT: --Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator McKinney, you're recognized to speak.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of the bracket motion and still in opposition of AM272 and LB258. You know, I'm getting a lot of emails from constituents from not just my district, from people across the state who agree with the sentiments of my

colleagues like Senator Hunt, Senator Dungan, Senator John Cavanaugh, and even myself that LB258 should die. It should die today. It should die. So when we get to cloture, you should vote no. You shouldn't vote for cloture, then vote no on the bill. You should vote no on cloture so the bill just dies, so we could just end this conversation. We could keep the will of the voters and ensure that the people's voice is upheld. That's what we should do as a body, because we should be working for the people. We shouldn't be working against them. So, whenever we get to cloture-- I don't know when that is, honestly. But whenever we do, you should vote no on cloture so we can just let this conversation die. Because this bill shouldn't be on the floor, this bill shouldn't have been introduced, and this conversation shouldn't be had. We should be having conversations about other things, not stripping away the will of the voters and decreasing the earning potential of young people in the state of Nebraska. That's what we shouldn't be having a conversation about. We should be having a conversation about why are we going to, you know, take away basic needs from different programs in the state, which is gonna happen during the budget conversation. We should be having a conversation about why we're one of not even a handful of probably a few states that's in the process of trying to build a prison and why we should save that money and put it back into the state so we couldn't-- so we wouldn't be in a budget deficit. That's what we should be having a conversation about. We shouldn't be having a conversation about this bill. So when we get to cloture, I advise all my colleagues, even though some people are not gonna listen to me, to vote no on cloture. Let the bill die. Because I wanna let you in on a little secret. If you vote yes on cloture and still vote no, no-- then vote no on the bill, you voted yes for the bill. You're letting it advance, for what reason? Let it die. We can let it die today. We don't have to come back on Select File and spend 4 more hours having this conversation. And as Senator Jacobson says, we're going over and over, back and forth about the same subject and the same topics all day. We could just kill this conversation today, because I think we should, because it's, it's frustrating. It's annoying. I think it's disrespectful to the people we are tasked with representing. And I don't know. I'm trying to, you know, think of the best words to say about this conversation and about this bill, and I do not have a lot of kind words, when I think about it. Who are we helping with this bill? Like, honestly speaking, quantify it. Who is being helped if this bill pass? Let's be real and let's be honest. Who stands to benefit the most if this bill passes? Ask yourself that question, and if it's not the people of Nebraska, you should be voting no. So ask yourself that question. If LB258 passes, who stands to benefit the most? The people

or the businesses? And if you land on business, which I believe you will, you should be voting no on this bill. Whenever we get the cloture, please vote no. N-o. Please vote no. Don't vote against your people. Thank you.

ARCH: Time, Senator. Senator Lippincott, you're recognized to speak.

LIPPINCOTT: Thank you, sir. There are several arguments against implementing a mandatory minimum wage which are often raised by economists, policymakers, and business leaders. And here's just a few common ones. (1) Job losses. One of the primary concerns is that raising the minimum wage may lead to job losses, particularly for low-skill workers. Businesses may not be able to afford the higher wages and might reduce their workforce, automate jobs, or hire fewer workers. (2) Reduced employment opportunities for low-skill workers. Opponents argue that higher minimum wages may price out younger or less experienced workers who are looking for entry-level jobs. With wages set higher, employers may be less inclined to hire individuals who need on-the-job training or lack experience. (3) Inflation. Raising the minimum wage could lead to higher costs for businesses, which may pass on to those increased costs to consumers in the form of higher prices. This could lead to inflation, which dis-- di-- diminishes the purchasing power of the increased wage. (4) Increased automation. To mitigate the cost of higher wages, businesses might invest in automation or technology to replace low-wage workers. This could disproportionately affect workers in industries like retail or food service, where tasks are often repetitive and easily automated. (5) Negative impact on small businesses. Small businesses with slim profit margins may struggle to meet higher wage requirements. For some, this could mean scaling back their operations, cutting jobs, or even closing altogether. Larger businesses may have the resources to absorb the costs, but small businesses could face more significant financial strain. (6) Regional differences. The cost of living varies widely across regions, and a national minimum wage may not reflect local economic conditions. A fixed minimum wage might be too high in areas with lower living costs and too low in places with higher costs of living, leading to disparities in the labor market. (7) Reduced benefits or hours. Employers might reduce benefits or cut workers' hours to offset the higher wages. In some cases, workers might end up with fewer total benefits or fewer working hours, which can result in an overall reduction in income and job quality. (8) Discouragement of skill development. Some argue that minimum wage laws could discourage workers from pursuing further education or job, job training, as higher wages might reduce the incentive for low-skilled workers to seek out skills that would increase their earning potential in the

long run. And finally, (9) impact on youth employment. Minimum wage laws can make it more difficult for young people to enter the workforce. Employers may be reluctant to hire inexperienced or young workers at a higher wage, particularly if they feel the worker's productivity does not justify the cost. I yield my time, sir.

ARCH: Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak. This is your last opportunity before your close.

CONRAD: Yes, and I'll be using my close. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, again, colleagues, and good evening. I am proud to continue leading the opposition to Senator Raybould's measure, LB258, to undercut the citizen initiative to provide modest but meaningful increases to the state minimum wage. The voters had before them choices to sign a petition or to vote on a measure. They read the petition, they were read the object statement, and they voted on a measure. If you, yourself, had the discernment to either sign or not sign and vote yes or no, you should afford the same respect to the discernment of the voters of Nebraska, who had the same options and opportunities that each of us had before them to engage with their government on this issue. Senator Raybould and others in her position decided not to run a meaningful opposition or educational campaign. because they were banking on the fact that they'd find enough people in the Legislature that were more than happy to stick it to low-income workers and to put in artificial caps and to put in carve-outs for kids. And let's be clear here. Voters have discernment. When measures were on the ballot to increase senators' salary with an indexing provision, Nebraska voters said no, and primarily, due to the indexing provision. When Nebraska voters had an option or opportunity to increase the minimum wage with an indexing provision, like about 20 of our sister states have as, as part of their minimum wage policy, they said yes. And Senator Raybould and others have thrown up these kind of strange arguments about, oh my gosh, with an indexing provision, maybe minimum wage might be really high in 20 years. Well, also, what would be the price of milk in 20 years? What would be the price of car tires in 20 years? What's the price of a gallon of gas in 20 years? We know that the index inflation, just like it is with Social Security benefits or other programs, has baked into it modest yet meaningful increases to ensure that earning power is not eviscerated by inflation. It's not that hard. That's why 60 percent of Nebraska voters got it. Not in one political party, not in one part of the state, over 60 percent of voters in 2014, and again, in 2022, a resounding win on a ballot initiative in a deep red state. They got it. They organized, they passed it, they got it. This Legislature's priorities are so strange to me. My friend, Senator Hansen, will push

to ensure state senators get paid minimum wage, but then undercut the ability of everyday Nebraskans to get minimum wage. The Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee has prioritized and pushed out a measure to give a 60% increase to our highly-paid constitutional officers, yet seek to undercut low-wage workers in our retail and restaurant and healthcare and home care. Their priorities are to give their political cronies 60% raises. Their priorities are to give themselves minimum wage protections, and at the same-- which are all borne by taxpayers, mind you. But they can't honor the will of the voter. They can't give the same minimum wage protection to low-wage workers and kids. And if you're curious about how many 16-19-year-olds are in the workforce in Nebraska according to the most recent statistics, it's just shy of 60,000 kids we're talking about. 60,000 working Nebraska kids, aged 16-19, are in the labor force. And you think it's OK to pay yourself minimum wage, but not these kids. You think it's OK to give your political cronies a 60% wage hike, but not even maintain the will of the voters for these kids. I'm glad your priorities are clear. I want the accountability.

ARCH: Time, Senator.

CONRAD: I want the record to show who you are.

ARCH: Senator Raybould, you're recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, colleagues. You know, I wanted to address why this is my priority bill. It was, it was going to be my priority bill back in 2023, but I spoke to Justin Wayne. And I said to Senator Wayne, I said, I would be happy to make LB20 my priority bill. And I asked him to help me pass legislation that the tribes were interested in passing. And we, we made the deal. I made LB20 my priority bill, and I was grateful for this legislative body to have passed it. LB20 was allowing those that ha-- were convicted of felony charges who have completed their sentences and parole and probation to have their vote restored. And thankfully, the colleagues in this body stood up and supported that measure. And thankfully, last November, all those individuals that have completed their sentences were allowed to vote for the first time. And I was very proud to have made that my priority bill. I am also proud to make this my priority bill this year. It brings a balance. It brings a balance to what our voters spoke about. It brings a balance in making this bill better. So I'm gonna go-- oh, I promised Connor Deboodt [PHONETIC], that he text-- he emailed me during his civics class. And I said I would give him a shout-out. And he was-- wanted to make a comment, and he gave me permission to use his name. My name is Connor Deboodt. I'm emailing

you on behalf of LB258 for my high school civics class. And I'm not sure if he's supporting LB258 or voting against it, but I'll leave that up to you. But I'm just going to read exactly what he said, because I promised him I would. I feel that this bill will not be good for the people, because raising the minimum wage makes your everyday supplies more expensive. They are already expensive, and raising the wage will have to make people charge more because they have to pay their employees more. Please prove me wrong on this bill. Thank you for your time. I'm looking forward to hearing from you in the near future. So thank you, Connor, for your comment and participating. And I'm glad I was able to read your comment. So I'm going to go back to my opening remarks since we're still on this bill. I just wanted to say that since the passage of Initiative 433-- and when we reach \$15 per hour in 2026, the percentage increase in the minimum wage over that 4-year period is 66.67%. These figures are included on one of the many handouts I have provided you, and you can see that the annual increase, year over year, has averaged 16.21%. So we've gone through some extraordinary increases over all these years to get minimum wage up to \$15. Businesses have done and will do what they can to adjust to the increases and as we, as policymakers, can provide them with predictability year over year, by capping that annual increase with LB258, which is 1.5%. The second change in the bill relates to the creation of a youth minimum wage. We've talked about this. This would only apply to workers age 14 and 15 and would set the wage at \$13.50 per hour. Since the minimum wage will be increasing based on indexing in AM272, I have included that the youth minimum wage rate would increase 1.5% every fifth year. It is imperative that what we can-- we have to do what we can do to ensure the economic viability of our small businesses, especially those that serve our rural communities. The significant increases that I just shared with you have already impacted many mom-and-pop stores and some have shared with me that they are closing their doors. By law and in all occupations, 14- and 15-year-olds are limited in so many of the following ways. I'm gonna skip that part because I've already discussed all the things that a 14- and 15-year-old are prohibited from doing. For these reasons, many employers resist the hiring of anyone younger than 16. As things currently stand, we are creating a financial hardship for many of our small businesses, including daycare, small rural grocers, and retailers, and many more across our state. It also forces youth out of the labor market. These are both very poor outcomes, and I believe that LB258 strikes a balance in a good way. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak, and this is your third opportunity.

M. CAVANAUGH: It is? Wow. I only say that because the question kept getting called right before I spoke, so I was on my first time every time, until, I guess, this motion. Yay. We've got about 37 minutes, I think, left on, on this motion and bill and all of those fun things. And I just-- there-- there's a lot of talk about minimum wage and it causing inflation. We are currently experiencing inflation, right now, live and local and nationally. And so-- and that has nothing to do with Nebraska. It has to do with decisions that are being made at a federal level. Tomorrow, I think inflation is going to go up even more, and the stock market keeps going down. And yeah. That has nothing to do with minimum wage in Nebraska. It has to do with the fact that-- well, eggs, as I brought up earlier, and that has to do with the, you know, bird flu and various other things. And so, we're having to slaughter chickens and not slaughter them for consumption, but dispose of them, so there's that. And then, just the cost of goods and services, because of tariffs and because of executive orders. And then, you know, there's also the uncertainty. I once-- I-- I'm not really well-versed in the stock market. And I once was talking to our former colleague, Brett Lindstrom, about it, and he said, the market likes certainty. It likes certainty. And right now, we are in the land of complete and utter uncertainty. The only thing we can be certain of is that every day, there's going to be a new announcement of some cuts from the federal government. Although the federal government did put out a, a, a statement about SNAP, Supplemental Nutrition Insurance Program, today and how it is unacceptable for states to be processing applications over 30 days. It shouldn't take more than 30 days, and there's 33 states not in compliance. Guess which one-- which side we're on? Yep, that's right, we're not in compliance. So, what else? What else? What else? We've got so much. My mind is very much into the weeds on the budget, which makes sense, but I'm also thinking about, like, what are our priorities, as a state? Nebraska, the good life. That used to be a thing we said a lot. And then it became Nebraska, it's not for everyone. And I think that went away, but it still feels pretty relevant. We, we need to increase our tax base. Increasing minimum wage increases our tax base. No, we can't do that. Instead, we need to increase sales tax and eliminate sales exempt-- or tax exemptions. OK. Let's do that across the board. Whoa, wait a second. You're talking about farmers here. We can't do that because they are the economic driver of the state, but we can defund the university, which is the other major economic driver of the state. But we can't tax farmers, but we have to use everyone in Nebraska's income taxes to pay for property tax relief for farmers. And fun thing, farmers already pay 70% of the valuation of their property taxes-- their property, and homeowners pay 100%, so they're already getting a tax

break in that avenue. I see I'm almost out of time, so I want to take this moment to say happy birthday to former Senator Steve Lathrop. Being in this Legislature sometimes feels like being on a penal colony. And I think-- how much time do I have left, Mr. Speaker?

ARCH: 30 seconds.

M. CAVANAUGH: 30 seconds. Well, I could sing a whole-- I won't sing Happy Birthday, because I learned from Sports Night, the first ever Aaron Sorkin show, that Happy Birthday is like copyrighted and you-- very-- they're very litigious. So you can't sing Happy Birthday on the mic. Oh. And-- oh, they are out of the 70 years. Well, then-- I'm, I'm not gonna sing it, because I don't want to torture you all. But, Sports Night reference there. Also, the very last episode of Sports Night is all about fiber, so-- and that's how they get sold. So if you guys wanna go look up a oldie--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

M. CAVANAUGH: --but a goodie. Thank you.

ARCH: Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak.

GUERECA: Thank you, Mr. President. Late night feels, late night feels. Getting dark in the Chamber. Thank you for everyone that's still tuning in back at home. So good evening, fellow Nebra-- it's not late night. Late night feels. Good evening, fellow Nebraskans. I think it's evening time. I'll say it's evening. Come on, 5:00. [INAUDIBLE] 4. We'll call it evening. So I won't, I won't repeat, but I've said it a couple times on the mic, but you know, sort of perusing through some of the literature that's gotten passed around. Here is a, a 2018 article, The Washington Post, Jared Bernstein, who sat on the Wash-- the White House Council of Economic Advisers, looked at employment trends, kind of overall, but he focused in on 3 underpaid sectors. Thank you, fellow Senator Kauth, for the chocolate-- in the retail, leisure, and hospitality and food service sectors. And what he found is that, quote, overall, in the low-wage sectors, job growth was slightly faster in states that raised their wage floors and unemployment fell a little bit. That's pretty good. Total unemployment actually grew 10%-- total employment grew 10% in states with minimum wage increases and only 8.2% in states with no increases. Retail trade employment grew 6.0% in the states with the increases in the wage-- minimum wage, and only 4.9% in states with no increases. Leisure and hospitality employment grew 16.3% in states with the minimum wage increases, compared to only 14.5% in states with no increases.

Employment in the food services, a subset of the leisure and hospitality industry, grew 17.2% in states with minimum wage increases and only an anemic 15.4% in states with no increases. Here's another interesting little factoid. In a 2016 survey commissioned by the Council of State Chambers, a Republican pollster, when surveying 1,000 business executives across the country, found that 80% of respondents supported raising the state's minimum wage. Only 8% opposed it. 12% came in neutral. Now, I, I occasionally like to refer to the 2025 Competitive [SIC] Redbook, passed out by our State Chamber, which are key indicators of Nebraska's business climate. This is just some, some good things that we have going on here in Nebraska. So in the, the months between September 2023 and September 2024, we, we added 23,600 non-agricultural jobs, putting us sixth in the country. I think that's pretty good. However, between July 1, 2022, and July 1, 2023, we had a net loss of about 1,000 people, so we should work on that. We should work on legislation that helps grow the good life and that helps entice folks to come live this good life. Let's see, our per capita personal income, 17th. Not bad. Exports per capita, 30th. We should be doing a little better than that. Let's see. There's some interesting ones. If you look at state and local full-time employee pay, we ranked 45th. Should pay our state employees a little better. The state of the tech workforce, we are ranked 33rd in percentage of our workforce in the tech sector. The wages and productivity of our production workers in manufacturing, we ranked 45th, so we should pay our manufacturing workers a little better. Oh, unemployment insurance taxes, we are ranked 45th. Yeah, we should probably help out our folks that are unemployed in between jobs a little better, as well. And venture capital investment, 36th in the country. Yeah, that's something we could work on. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Time, Senator. Senator Spivey, you are recognized to speak, and this is your last opportunity.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And good evening, again, colleagues. I rise in support of the motion to bracket, and again, I'm not in support of LB258 and AM272. And I just wanted to uplift a couple stats really quick, just around this conversation. I don't think a carve-out is necessary when we talk about the unintended consequences of bills, or does this really solve a problem. If the voters wanted to have a carve-out for young people, they would have put it on the initiative. They did not. I don't think that this is acceptable for supporting young people and the implications to their families. And there was actually a study done that talked about pay equity issues, even for young people. And there was a story done by Nebraska Public Media around Megan, who was 16 years old when she first found out that she

was being paid less than her male counterpart. She was a head hostess at the Round the Bend Steakhouse in Ashland, Nebraska, and she was training an employee. The two were talking about how much they made and talking about some frustrations. And he said, the only reason why I'm here is because I make \$11 an hour. Again, this was before minimum wage increases. And she said, no, you don't. And he said, yeah, I do. And so with that information, she took it and went and asked for a raise. In this article, it talks about she, at 16, was contributing to her family, needed the money, and we know that, again, when you add in layers of identities that you get paid less. And so having a, a carve-out for young people on top of that for a young person that may be black, Latina, a woman, that there's going to be higher pay equity issues and so, again, I don't think that this, that this is necessary. I do think that is not solving for an issue. It's not the reason why small businesses are going out of business and that we could be spending our time, as a body, really focusing on complex key issues that are really impacting our neighbors and what is in front of us. And so with that, Mr. President, I yield the rest of my time to Senator Dungan.

ARCH: Senator Dungan, 4-- 2 minutes, 50.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President and Senator Spivey. I appreciate that. And as always, appreciate your comments and I appreciate a little bit more time. I know we're getting close to the end of debate here today, colleagues, and I wanted to make just a couple more points before we start talking a little more about what the vote is gonna look like on this, to make sure people understand what they're voting on. Couple of points I wanna hit really quick. I know we've talked about the economic impact of an increased minimum wage as it pertains to maybe some individual employers, but I want to take a little bit broader look at what the increased minimum wage means for economies in general. Speaking overarchingly when you're talking about communities, states, when you have an increased minimum wage, what that ultimately results in is more spending. When you have people who have a little bit more money in their pockets, especially if we're talking about sort of everyday working people, they are much more likely to utilize that additional money in the community. So if you're making \$1,500 on a paycheck and then you make \$1,800 on that paycheck, that \$300 increase, you are more likely to invest that in your local businesses, local restaurants, local establishments, and that is going to create a overall boon to your local community. In addition to that, when you have that business growth, what you are ultimately going to see is more jobs. So I know there's been this concern that's been expressed, I think, falsely by some of the proponents of this bill that if you

increase minimum wage, it decreases jobs. There is a growing amount of research, when looking at states, countries, all around the world where there has been an increased minimum wage, that has demonstrated no causal effect on a decrease in jobs, even when you specifically target low-income communities. And so I-- there's actually going to be more money being spent in the community, which, an increased amount of money being spent in the community results in more jobs being available. I think it just makes sense. It just makes sense to give this little bit more money to people who need it. And as has been pointed out, there's a number of businesses that actually provide more than the minimum wage that we're talking about here. But for those who are working in the places that don't provide that, this increase in their bottom line is not just gonna benefit them. It's going to pass that economic boon onto the individual economies, both at the local level and then ultimately, at the state level. And when you have more business being done in a community, that business can grow. And when that business grows, you create jobs, and that's what ultimately we want to see here in Nebraska is a booming economy. And what this bill does is it curbs the ability of everyday people. to make that living wage and ultimately not be able then, to turn around and invest their dollars in their community--

ARCH: Time, Senator.

DUNGAN: --which is bad for Nebraska. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Ballard, you're recognized to speak.

BALLARD: Thank you, Mr. President. And I'm glad Senator Dungan mentioned minimum wages across the, across the globe. Because I, I was looking-- researching minimum wages, looking at European countries that have very aggressive minimum wages, very high minimum wages. They also add a caveat for youth wages. Because as we heard on-- today on the floor, that youth wages [INAUDIBLE] access to the labor market. And so without reiterating that, I did want to give Senator Raybould time, which could be her final-- her closing final statements on this, so I'd like to yield the rest of my time to Senator Raybould.

ARCH: Senator Raybould, 4 minutes, 30.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Senator Ballard. LB258 isn't a bill intended to weaken our wages or our workers. It is intended to find a reasonable balance that ensures businesses have predictability and can stay in business to be able to provide basic needs and beyond, for Nebraskans everywhere. It's been a long day, colleagues. Thank you for sticking

close by for this important discussion. Much of the opponent commentary has focused on the petition initiative passed by the voters and their assertion that once the voters have spoken on a question, the Legislature should be completely hands-off. They have asserted that the people's voice is sacrosanct. You don't have to look any further than the legislative session to see that this belief system, that the will of the voters is the final say. It is as consistent as the weather in Nebraska. First, term limits were enacted by Nebraska voters in 2000. Measure 415 passed with 55.82% of the vote. LR19CA, introduced by our colleague, Senator Dover, seeks to change term limits from 2 years to 4-year terms to 3. I support this. And apparently so does Senator Conrad, who con spa-- who co-sponsored this LR19CA. She was also a co-sponsor of this same proposal in 2023. A second measure to change term limits has been introduced this year by Senator Hunt. We will likely take these measures up on the floor in the future, so I guess not all of us consistently believe that the-- when, when the voters vote, that's it, we're done. These bills come back, because there's a reason they come back. Second, in 2016, the people passed a referendum of the death penalty repeal, the referendum, referendum to repeal, the repeal passed with 60.64%. And since we spent a little time talking about county results, I want to be sure to mention that the only one county voted to retain, and you're sitting in it: Lancaster County. Yes. Regardless of those results, Senator McKinney has introduced LR15CA, which seeks to ban the death penalty in Nebraska, even though our voters have spoken on this. I want to be clear. I support these legis-- these legislative resolutions. And it isn't because, as I have been repeatedly accused of-- and, of course, a whole bunch of other things. It isn't because, as I've been repeatedly accused of, I don't respect the will of the voters. We have one house, the Unicameral. We colloquially refer to the people as the second house. I think the ability for the people to bring issues is a great part of our state, but I also respect this institution and our role in the process. It isn't undermining. It's bringing balance to the laws we enact. Why do we come back here every year if we're going to hold a belief that once an issue is enacted, it shouldn't be changed? We're changing bills every year. Legislation and our constitution are living documents, and our vote and the people's roles both play a part through the whole process. Senator Jacobson pointed out earlier that in the same paragraph from our State Constitution that gives people the power of initiative also outlines how the Legislature may enact changes to that leg-- changes to that language. I ask for your vote. Please vote no to bracket. I ask for your yes vote on AM272, yes for cloture, and yes for this bill. Thank

you all for participating and offering great comments. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, colleagues. Well, I support-- respectfully disagree with Senator Raybould, and I support the bracket motion and oppose AM272, and oppose LB258. And I just-- you know, some of the points Senator Raybould made, so the constitution or the-- there's a distinction between constitutional amendments and initiatives and referendums. So those are 3 separate things, and Senator Jacobson talked about the different levels. Initiatives are statutory changes started by the people, and they take a certain number of signatures-- and I can't remember off the top of my head. Constitutional amendment can be an-- a-- initiated or began by either a petition collecting signatures by the people or the Legislature, and then it still is put-- then put on the ballot for the people to vote on. And so the change in the term limits, as proposed by Senator Dover and I believe, Senator Hunt, those are constitutional amendments that if the Legislature approves them, they would be approved as to be put on the ballot for the people to vote on. So I think there is a distinction between put-- choosing to put something in front of the voters and letting them decide about it and what, what is being proposed here today. And I would say, again, I don't think anybody here is saying we do not have the power to do this. I think the people-- the folks who are opposed to LB258, our issue is that we don't think we should do this, because it fundamentally underline-- undermines the intention and the will of the voters. And I have articulated sev-- several specific ways that I think it does that, including the fact that the voters voted for a, a, a minimum wage that continues to increase going forward, and they pegged it to the CPI. I think that was a very specific choice by the voters, intentional, it is not something that anybody could argue the voters did not or were not aware of or didn't know what they were doing. It's right on, right on the ballot on that page. And so, the, the-- there's a distinction or a difference in opinion here, about what that higher threshold that the Legislature has to overturn the initiative process of the voters is about. And I have said several times that that-- the voters, in 2004, increased that in that constitutional section, which I think is Section 3, Article 2-- or Article 3, Section 2, sorry, where the voters took it from a bare majority of the Legislature and raised it. And that was a specific expression of the will of the voters, to say to the Legislature, don't change what we have done, except for in extreme circumstances. And I think there are specific circumstances where it would be respectful of the voters to make a change to the

statute that would still require that supermajority. And one of the reasons, I think, for that supermajority, is so that we don't go in and monkey around a whole bunch while we're in there making small changes or fixes. And the example of the gambling ballot initiative from 2020 comes to mind, where the proponents of that ballot initiative came to the Legislature and said, we need a little bit of cleanup here. We need some help to get this fully implemented, and so we're asking for a change. And so that was one such example where the Legislature needed its supermajority to make that change, to make sure that we weren't undermining the will of the people. What I think is being proposed here is a fundamental shift away from what the voters passed, and I think it goes contrary to the intention and the grant of that power to us. We are granted that power for a reason. This does not meet that reason. That is the objection. So not that we don't have the power, not that we can't do it, but in this instance, it does not meet the test. We should not do it. The voters were clear. They wanted to increase the minimum wage. They wanted it to gradually go up after it had reached the stair step. They do not want us to truncate it at something like 1.5% or less, meaning that going into the future, it will not keep up with inflation. They wanted a minimum wage that grew and kept up with inflation. That is the clearest articulation of the voter's intent. And so, I am in support of the bracket motion. I am opposed to AM272. I'm opposed to LB258. I, I can't-- I don't think I can reiterate it more times, but there is a distinction between the ability to change something and whether you should change something. And I know everybody who wants to change this is going to get up again. If we keep having this conversation, they're going to get and say, people are saying we can't do this. Not true. Can't be more clear. We can do this. We shouldn't do this. Just because you have power, doesn't mean you should exercise it. The classic axiom, might doesn't equal right. Right? Just because you can do something, doesn't mean you should. So it is wrong to undermine the will of the voters in the way that is being proposed here. And so, I will continue to stand up and talk against it. I assume I'm gonna be-- this, maybe, was my third time. I'm not sure. You didn't tell me. Did you tell me? All right. This is my third time. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak. This is your third opportunity.

DUNGAN: Thank you Mr. President. Colleagues, I do rise, yet again, in favor of the bracket motion and opposed to the underlying bill of LB258 and the AM272. So we're going to be getting to a vote here soon, colleagues, and I just wanted to make sure that people fully understand kind of what is happening here, with regards to what it is

we are voting on. So, big picture: LB258 is a bill that changes what the current law is as it pertains to minimum wage. LB258 takes what was approved by the voters and seeks to curb the minimum wage modifications that are already in law and walk them back in a way that really does make a fundamental policy deviation from what was contained in the ballot initiative that was just passed in 2022. When we reach cloture, I want to be very clear, colleagues, a vote for cloture is essentially a vote for this bill. If you do not support this bill, you do not have to give it cloture. Debate ends at 8 hours on General File, regardless of your vote or not on cloture. The difference is, if there are 33 votes for cloture, we proceed to a vote on the underlying bill. If there are not 33 votes for cloture, we move on to the next item on the agenda, or as it would likely happen today, we adjourn. So a vote for cloture is not a vote to end debate, otherwise we keep going into perpetuity. By virtue of the rules that have been established with this Legislature as the Speaker articulated at the beginning of session, it is 8 hours of debate on General File in most cases. and it's at those 8 hours that the decision of voting for cloture or against cloture is the ultimate decision you have to make. So I've had conversations with some of my colleagues in my first couple of years here and then also some of the new people who are here this year, who I think were under the impression that you had to vote for cloture in order to quote unquote, stop debate, but I wanna be very clear. Whether you vote for cloture or not, the 8 hours come. And so, a vote for cloture is a vote essentially, for the bill. If you are opposed to the bill, you can vote against cloture or not provide your vote for cloture if you so choose. That is your prerogative as a senator. So I just want to be very, very clear about that. And colleagues, we've had a lot of debate today about what is-- what we are able to do. And I think Senator John Cavanaugh did do a good job of highlighting just because you can do something doesn't mean you should do something. He often talks about the might is right. With my analogies, I always come back to, with great power comes great responsibility. Right? Uncle Ben told us that. And it's very important that we realize that we have a lot of power here. There's 49 of us sitting in this room who get to make decisions. Frankly, we are the most powerful legislative body in the country, by virtue of the fact that we are nonpartisan and that we are a single body. We are a Unicameral. There are 49 of us who speak to these issues and vote on these issues, and the decisions that we make in here impact the entire state of Nebraska. And we have a state that has voted for the minimum wage law as it currently exists, which has been in place since 2022, with a overwhelming majority of almost 60%. They did so, having on their ballot in front of them clear language about the decisions that

they were making. They did so with the education that had been provided to them, through local voter guides and through various folks they talked to, and they did so with a clear-eyed decision to make sure that our minimum wage simply keeps up with the massively increasing cost of living that we are seeing year after year. And they did so, colleagues, with the intention of us not walking it back. Because if people are going to vote on a ballot initiative, only to know that their Legislature, in the next year or two, is going to pat them on the head and tell them they-- it was fun that they did that, but we're actually going to go ahead and change the law, it's problematic. And the, the-- Article 3 of our Nebraska Constitution contemplates that this should be a big deal and that it does take those 33 votes to, in fact, amend or change or in any way, shape, or form alter what the voters have supported. So colleagues, keep that in mind. Trust the people of Nebraska on this issue, trust that what we are doing with LB258 is incredibly problematic, and think about the message that it sends your constituents. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Juarez, you are recognized to speak.

JUAREZ: Thank you, Speaker Arch. Well, almost good evening, everyone. And we're getting close to closing on our activity today on this bill. I just wanted to share a few points with you. I am in support of the bracket until June. I will vote no on cloture and no on AM272 and LB258. I want to mention that there are 3 decades of extensive research which refutes the claim that increasing the minimum wage causes increased unemployment and business cloture-- closures. Increasing the minimum wages increases consumer spending. Of course, there is great improvement for employee morale and decreasing employee financial stress. There is increased productivity, lower error and accident rates, less product waste, and best customer service. And I yield the rest of my time to Senator Conrad. Thank you.

ARCH: Senator Conrad, 4 minutes.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Juarez. Friends, we're gonna get a cloture motion here and it won't be debatable and this might be the last word. Appreciate everybody who's engaged in the debate and I want to end with a few voices, one from the past and, and two from the future, and-- or two from the present. The voice from the past is my friend, Senator Raybould's. In 2014, when she was running to be the lieutenant governor of this state, she joined me for a press conference to encourage Nebraskans to vote for Initiative 425, because minimum wage increases were good for business. And she said voting for minimum wage was important, to show the contrast that her and her

running mate, Chuck Hassebrook had against Pete Ricketts. And Senator Raybould noted, at that time, that the Nebraska Legislature's failure to pass increases in the minimum wage demonstrated a triumph of partisan politics over common sense. She went on to note that 7 in 10 minimum wage workers were women and that raising the minimum wage would bring in an extra \$300 a month, which would go a long way. And she quoted-- and she said, I quote, I think we can all agree if you work 40 hours a week, you should not have to rely upon the government to afford food, rent, or transportation. She said it was good business sense to raise the minimum wage in 2014, when she sought your vote for lieutenant governor. And now, as she has secured your vote for a state senate seat, she seeks to undercut her own words and values and the will of the people, low-income workers, and kids who are making minimum wage. And here are two voices from the present. Dear Senator Conrad, having a sub-minimum wage for 19 and under would greatly impact me as a service worker. I've worked and held a job since I-- since the day I turned 15. I've worked as a pizza delivery driver, a sandwich shop employee, and a barista, and this allowed me to save for college. I was able to buy my own meals, clothing, and school supplies, and take care of car maintenance. Kids and minors in the state of Nebraska should be granted their minimum wage, so kids like me would be able to provide for themselves when their families can't. Other kids and young adults are trying to start building their futures. And another voice, from Nebraska-- worker. A young worker in north Omaha, who's begging and pleading that we do not pass this measure. My name is Jicene Williams [PHONETIC]. I'm from the north side of Omaha. It's not right to drop how much we make already. We don't get paid enough or get enough hours today to help our parents pay the bills. And having kids that are in the system and looking to work paycheck to paycheck to paycheck to help out with the bills in our family are just increasing my struggle. It's gonna make it worse. It is not the right thing to do. We're equal people for equal work. If anything, we should have more opportunities instead of sub-minimum wages. How will I pay for college without going into deep debt if I don't have a chance to earn equal pay for equal work? There's already enough struggle, and this just adds some more. I hope that somebody reads this, and I hope somebody thinks about this. And with that, I'd encourage your vote against cloture, for the bracket motion, against the committee amendment, and against the hateful, harmful, needless measure, LB258.

ARCH: Mr. Clerk, you have a motion on the desk.

CLERK: I do, Mr. President. Senator Raybould would move to invoke cloture pursuant to Rule 7, Section 10.

ARCH: Senator Raybould, for what purpose do you rise? There has been a request to place the house under call. Question before the body is, shall the house be placed under call? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: 31 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on the motion to-- on the call of the house.

ARCH: The house is under call. Senators, please record your presence. Those unexcused senators outside the Chamber, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. All unauthorized personnel, please leave the floor. The house is under call. All members are now present. Colleagues, the question before the body is the cloture motion. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. There's been a request for a roll call vote. Mr. Clerk, please call the roll.

CLERK: Senator Andersen voting yes. Senator Arch voting yes. Senator Armendariz voting yes. Senator Ballard voting yes. Senator Bosn voting yes. Senator Bostar voting no. Senator Brandt voting yes. Senator John Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Clements voting yes. Senator Clouse voting yes. Senator Conrad voting no. Senator DeBoer voting no. Senator DeKay voting yes. Senator Dorn voting yes. Senator Dover voting yes. Senator Dungan voting no. Senator Fredrickson voting no. Senator Guereca voting no. Senator Hallstrom voting yes. Senator Hansen voting yes. Senator Hardin voting yes. Senator Holdcroft voting yes. Senator Hughes voting yes. Senator Hunt voting no. Senator Ibach voting yes. Senator Jacobson voting yes. Senator Juarez voting no. Senator Kauth voting yes. Senator Lippincott voting yes. Senator Lonowski voting yes. Senator McKeon voting yes. Senator McKinney voting no. Senator Meyer voting yes. Senator Moser voting yes. Senator Murman voting yes. Senator Prokop voting no. Senator Quick voting no. Senator Raybould voting yes. Senator Riepe voting yes. Senator Rountree voting no. Senator Sanders voting yes. Senator Sorrentino voting yes. Senator Spivey voting no. Senator Storer voting yes. Senator Storm voting yes. Senator Strommen voting yes. Senator von Gillern voting yes. Senator Wordekemper voting no. Vote is 33 ayes, 16 nays to invoke cloture, Mr President.

ARCH: The cloture motion is successful. The next item to be voted is the bracket motion. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: 15 ayes, 34 nays to bracket the bill, Mr. President.

ARCH: The bracket motion is not successful. Next vote is the adoption of AM272 to LB258. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: 33 ayes, 9 nays, Mr. President, on adoption of the committee amendment.

ARCH: The amendment is adopted. Next vote is LB258, advance to E&R Initial. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: 32 ayes, 17 nays to advance the bill, Mr. President.

ARCH: Senator Dungan, please state your point of order.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Question for the-- I guess, the Clerk or also, the presiding officer here. I know Article 3, as we've talked about here, Section 2 specifically enumerates that the first power reserved, has the line that says, the Legislature shall not amend, repeal, modify, or impair a law enacted by the people by initiative, contemporaneously with the adoption of this initiative measure or at any time thereafter, except upon a vote of at least two-thirds of all of the members of the Legislature. I believe 32 had voted for this to advance from General File to Select, and I'm curious how that plays out with that provision of noninterference and what the precedent would be for making the determination as to the application of the two-thirds requirement from General to Select.

ARCH: Mr. Clerk, I would ask that you respond to that question.

CLERK: Senator, the understanding of the Legislature has always been that you have internal processes in which you advance bills in the same way that there are many rules that, that revolve around the final passage of a bill. That's when most of your thresholds kick in, both constitutionally, as well as within your rules. It is that final passage on Final Reading in which you are taking final action, you are actually legislating. We have never held that those internal advancements of the bill are, are akin to passage of a bill.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Is there any precedent previously for this kind of determination being made with regards to the overturning of a ballot initiative with two-thirds of the vote proceeding from one stage to the next?

CLERK: You, you have-- there are instances in the past of the Legislature in which you have advanced things to Final Reading shy of that 33 vote threshold.

DUNGAN: Specifically, as it pertains to ballot init-- modifications to ballot initiatives, like we're talking about here?

CLERK: I don't have instances specifically to ballot initiatives, just in which you have been shy of that threshold for other constitutional measures.

DUNGAN: All right. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Thank you, Mr. President.

ARCH: LB258 does advance to E&R Initial. Mr. Clerk, for items. I raise the call.

CLERK: Mr. President, your Committee on Government, Military and Veterans Affairs, chaired by Senator Sanders, reports LB693 to General File with committee amendments. Your Committee on Enrollment and Review reports LB22A, LB41A, LB148A, and LB529 as correctly engrossed and placed on Final Reading. Amendment to be printed from Senator Dungan, to LB629. New A bill, LB 230A, introduced by Senator Hallstrom. It's a bill for an act relating to appropriations; to appropriate funds to aid in the carrying out of the provisions of LB230; and declare an emergency. New LR, LR104, from Senator Lonowski. That will be laid over. Name adds: Senator Murman, name added to LB383; Senator Rountree to LB391; Senator McKeon, name added to LR17. Finally, Mr. President, a priority motion. Senator Riepe would move to adjourn the body until Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

ARCH: Colleagues, you've heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Opposed, nay. We are adjourned.