

and talking about humaneness is exactly what the McFarland amendment does. These individuals, I think, deserve the dignity and respect that a higher level of compensation would provide to them. Now going up to the level that Senator McFarland talks about would still keep us among states bordering us at the bottom or very close to the bottom. It is not an excessive increase, and though it is I think \$20 beyond the \$10 that the committee talks about, it is still short of what we would optimally like to see, but as a compromise, it is a compromise. The present proposals in the committee amendments are not a compromise. They are capitulation on the part of the weaker individuals, politically, that are trying to adjust the changes that we want to see here versus the stronger political forces that want to maintain lower workmen's comp benefits. And so I recognize the impact on the business community and recognize the concern of the business organizations in this state, but they have to recognize the responsibility to these individuals and, hopefully, recognize that this change is not excessive and is warranted, and I hope all of you will share in that viewpoint and vote for the McFarland amendment to the committee amendments.

PRESIDENT: Senator Coordsen, please, followed by Senator McFarland.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, and members of the body. I think there might well be from some of the conversations a little bit of misunderstanding as to how the weekly benefits for workers' compensation work. I would share with you that these figures, or those that were distributed to the floor, are maximum benefits, and when you increase the maximum benefit, you don't increase the benefit for the lower income worker, those that are already covered. Their benefits stay the same as what they are entitled to. If we increase the benefits under this amendment to the amendment, or under the committee amendments, for the worker that was earning \$17,000 a year, for the worker that was earning \$19,000 a year at the time they were injured in the past or at the time they are injured in the future, those weekly benefits for that person will stay the same. This is typical of nearly all of the workers' compensation plans across the United States in that they attempt to replace about two-thirds of a worker's weekly wage. In Nebraska, we do not use the average weekly wage rate. Rather, we set a limit in law. I would refer you for just a second to the handout on what the surrounding states do, and these, by the