

still working in the Legislature in some fashion, and they can't remember when the change to \$49 was made. Now, granted, there is a good reason to have a lower amount. You don't want to have the maximum and minimum the same. You don't want to have them too close together. But to say an injured individual is not entitled to at least two-thirds of a minimum wage job over a 40-hour week, I think is only fair. Look at the bene...look at what's happened in the industry, business. Look what has taken place across the country. I'm...my background is in personnel. And individuals who work in these types of jobs that traditionally have to do...have to apply for worker's comp because it's a dangerous area, and as hard as the employers work to try to make it a safe environment it doesn't always work out that way. But what's happened is folks are going to part-time employees, they're going to more and more part-time employees, and they're doing that because there are benefits they derive from it. They don't have to pay insurance. They don't have to pay health insurance for a part-time employee under 32 hours a week, they don't have to. They can get by with a number of different types of benefits, if they reduce their work force to part-time status. There have even been laws that have been introduced to move away from that so that an employer cannot get around the issue of basically having two work forces that are part-time, yet they do a full-time job. None of them have been passed yet.

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR HALL: But clearly it deals with the issue of where do our priorities lie. That individual who is probably working two part-time jobs gets injured on one, is still so injured that they can't be employed in that other job. They ought to be entitled to at least two-thirds of a minimum wage salary. That's all this proposal does. It raises it to \$352 a month, \$352 a month. The current provision of \$49 is \$196 a month. That is not enough to support anyone. And, ladies and gentlemen, they are not partially hurt when they're injured and incapable of working. They're hurt all the way around. They ought to be entitled to at least two-thirds of a minimum wage position. It clearly has not been changed, it needs to be changed, it needs to be brought up to a minimum level. I would urge the adoption of the amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Coordsen, further discussion, followed by Senators McFarland and Chambers.