

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Coordsen, please, followed by Senator Hefner.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, and members of the body, a certain amount of conversation has taken place on the floor comparing one part of workers' compensation coverage and that is the weekly benefit and what that weekly benefit should be. And certainly...you have to forgive my cold a little bit, certainly the pure figures would compare, as Senator McFarland indicates. But I would suggest to you that the committee amendments are in line with not only the surrounding states, with the exception of Iowa, but with most of the rest of the United States, and that we do compare on a total program quite well. Twenty-three states, most of which have higher maximum weekly benefits than Nebraska, either limit the amount that can be collected or require offsets of Social Security payments or other compensation that an injured party might receive from that maximum earned weekly benefit. Nebraska has no limit on the amount that can be collected by a disabled worker, nor do we have any reductions in that amount. It is simply, as is the case in 48 of the other states, two-thirds of the income of a person who is disabled up to, as in current law, \$245, or as proposed in the committee amendments, up by 1991, \$265 a week. This is the way in nearly all of the states the benefits are computed. We share that with the rest of the states. Nebraska has a lower wage rate structure than many of the other states with higher weekly benefits. Quite probably, although I didn't research this, we cover an equal percentage of the workers at 100 percent or thereabouts of their weekly income. I think the committee amendments are fair. I would reiterate what I said yesterday with regard to the committee amendments on 313. The business community, because of the tremendous increases in premiums on the medical payment side, were opposed to any weekly benefit increase.

SPEAKER BARRETT PRESIDING

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR COORDSEN: The labor community wanted what was in the bill. This bill would not be here before us if I had not selected it as a committee priority bill. I don't think there were probably the votes in committee to advance it. It is here because I felt that we needed to maintain an increase in workers' compensation that at least kept up with the inflation