

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members. The amendment deals with a problem I have related to you earlier dealing with the matter of those individuals who are employed, lose employment due to a drug problem, then lose unemployment compensation benefits unless they go into a treatment program but do not have the ability to pay for a treatment program, how do we deal with that problem? My amendment says the loss of these benefits shall not occur if the employer does not provide health insurance coverage for treatment for the employee, or the employer does not provide funding to pay for such treatment for the employee. What we are trying to do there is to recognize that there are individuals out there employed not covered by health insurance or in a situation where the employer, if they don't have health insurance, will not provide the cost of treatment for that employee, and if that is the situation, what is this individual to do? They lose their job, they lose their income. They are usually individuals without wealth, without savings to pay for the four, five, six thousand dollar cost of treatment. How does this individual get into a treatment program? The only way I can see is to have some insurance coverage or to have the employer pay for that in those circumstances. I offer this as a friendly amendment to deal with that particular problem. Otherwise you have a measure that does not recognize the real world out there and the cost of providing treatment. So I would ask for the adoption of the amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Discussion? Senator Hefner, Senator Chambers next.

SENATOR HEFNER: Mr. President, and members of the body, I rise to oppose the Wesely amendment. This is a new policy and I don't know whether we are ready for this or not yet. I was wondering what would happen if an employee was caught stealing. Would the employer have to pay to have him go to a rehabilitation school on that? I think we are going a little bit too far. I don't know what the cost of a program like this would be, and unemployment compensation benefits are given when a person loses his or her job through no fault of their own, and this employee knows when he is caught using illegal drugs that it is his own fault. So I would urge you to vote against this amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Chambers.