

SENATOR COORDSEN: This is the bill to address a problem that was brought to light by a Nebraska Supreme Court decision of, I believe the date was February 16 on that, that had an impact upon the operations of the Worker's Compensation Court. Traditionally, it has...the Worker's Compensation Court has operated under the...what they thought to be statutory authority that they had the responsibility and authority to settle all issues relative to Worker's Compensation Court cases that appeared before it, both in the amount of the compensation in disputes between the insurance carrier and the insured. And it had been held, and I am quoting now from the dissenting opinion on the courts that the Worker's Compensation Act is remedial in nature and its purpose is to do justice to workers without expensive litigation and unnecessary delay. The majority of the court felt that because of some of the wording in statute that the Worker's Compensation Court had the authority to decide some of the issues for the injured employee but couldn't make decisions on the part of the insurance company or the employer and settle disputes in those particular cases. And this amendment, then, would add into statute number 48-161 a refinement of the jurisdiction of the Worker's Compensation Court, and the language will be that...the added language would be "Such court shall have jurisdiction to decide any issue ancillary to the resolution of an employee's right to workers' compensation benefits." The Worker's Compensation Court felt that with this ruling there exists the possibility that a worker, before they could get final resolution in their case, might have to file suit to recover damages in district court or make other efforts to redress their problem. And the whole intent, as it has been explained to me, of the worker's compensation law is to make it as easy as possible, as inexpensive as possible for an injured worker to have access to Worker's Compensation Court to settle disagreements that might arise. So, with that, I would attempt to answer any questions but would move for the adoption of this amendment. It was brought to me by the Worker's Compensation Court in order to clarify an apparent existing problem in statute, an heretofore undiscovered problem, I might add. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Is there discussion on the amendment offered by Senator Coordsen? Senator Coordsen, anything further?

SENATOR COORDSEN: Adoption of this amendment, Mr. Speaker.