

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Hefner.

SENATOR HEFNER: Mr. President and members of the body, I rise to oppose the Wesely amendment that's found on page 1222. This is a new change in state policy. There hasn't been a public hearing on it, there was no bill introduced this year that I know of on it, and it's a major change and do we want to write new legislation on the floor and what this does is basically guts the bill. It basically guts the bill. Now my amendment that was adopted and amended by the Coordsen amendment was to promote a drug-free workplace and we held a public hearing on it. We got testimony from those that supported it and those that opposed it and the committee did advance it out of committee. But I think what we need to do and what my intention is to discourage drug abuse, not encourage it. I think this amendment would encourage it. But we need to discourage the abuse of drugs in the workplace. We need to work towards a drug-free workplace, and like Senator Crosby said, we need more information on this, but we must remember too that unemployment compensation benefits goes to those who lose their job through no fault of their own, and I believe when a person is drinking or taking drugs, that is his own fault, and I realize that he certainly needs help. But it appears to me that this amendment, if somebody gets fired for drug abuse, they automatically begin to receive unemployment benefits and I think that's wrong because now under our statutes, if an employee is fired, they would be disqualified for a certain number of weeks and that's in the range of a seven to ten week deal. But like I said before, these employees should only receive benefits when they lose their job through no fault of their own. I concur that this certainly needs more study and I would encourage Senator Wesely to introduce a study resolution on this and let the Business and Labor Committee carry out this in-depth study on this problem. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Let the record indicate that Senator Schellpeper had some guests in our south balcony, six students from District 1 in Schuyler with their teacher. Senator Elmer, would you care to discuss the Wesely amendment?

SENATOR ELMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, yes, I would, having been a businessman for over 30 years and having 20 to 30 employees from time to time. It's nice to think of an employee-employer relationship as a family, like you'd be a