

employers and very few employees, for that matter, who would fall under the state minimum wage but they still do. All we do here, through LB 297, is to try to bring the state minimum wage, those employees and those employers who don't meet the federal minimum requirements, up to the same level as their counterparts who are required by the federal legislation with regard to a minimum wage payment. Why do that? Well, frankly, I think it's only fair that the State of Nebraska require the employers who don't fall under the federal mandate to pay their employees at the same rate. What has happened, in all actuality, is that the employers are at least paying the federal wage in most cases because of the low number of individuals out there applying for jobs, in fact, their unemployment rate is so low you see employers paying over and above the minimum wage. So the issue of the payment, the amount of money is really not an issue at all with regard to many employers. We did have some testimony, I think, in a neutral capacity and may have even been in opposition to the bill, some individual has come in on a couple different occasions who... individual who happened to own a seasonal operation, it was a Dairy Queen kind of operation where they hire part-time students on a seasonal basis and they would be affected because they don't hire over ten employees and their annual gross sales are not in excess of half a million dollars. So they're not covered by the federal mandate. They would be affected by the state minimum wage. They think that that's going to hurt their business. It's tough to argue with that but I also would say that the minimum wage, as it's portrayed in this bill at four and a quarter, is not an excessive amount of money and I think it is time for the state to catch up. The last time, I think almost ten years passed between the minimum wage that was put in effect at 3.35 by the federal government before the State of Nebraska caught up. That's what LB 297 does. It puts us in line with the federal wage. It makes both the state employees that are covered equal to those of the federal employees that are mandated at that level. Mr. Speaker, I would urge the advancement of LB 297 to E & R Initial.

SPEAKER BAACK PRESIDING

SPEAKER BAACK: You have an amendment on the desk, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Coordsen would move to amend the bill.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the