

Those workers are the same. They're an employee trying to make a life for themselves. They're not out there on the dole, they're not out there on welfare, they're out there trying to work, and we find consistently in the Health and Human Services field that I work on here in the Legislature that our biggest problems are with these low income individuals. They're trying to work, and yet as a result of that they don't qualify for a number of programs we have in place for health care, for other types of assistance, and so they disqualify themselves by working, and at the same time their pay is so poor that they can't afford health insurance, they don't have any benefits, family leave; I have legislation in for family medical leave, we don't have that in the state. Many companies don't provide leave for these individuals. They don't have health insurance for these individuals, and so it's not just a wage issue, it's a broader issue than that. It's just a sort of decent standard of living we'd like to bring to all people. And you look at it from that viewpoint, and you can understand why this bill is at least a step forward. I think there are two sides to the issue. We've heard the one side on the small employer, a legitimate side, legitimate viewpoint, but I think hopefully we'll consider the employee out there, and what they're going through as they have a life to live, and a family to care for, obligations to meet, and they live on a minimum wage, with no benefits, and no other sorts of insurance that they might require. It seems to me that in many cases, not all cases, but it seems to me this wage is certainly something we ought to approach in a positive fashion, so I support Senator Hall's bill, and I support the advancement of LB 297.

SENATOR MORRISSEY: Thank you, Senator Wesely. We'll now go to Senator Coordsen, followed by Senator Hall, and Senator Robinson.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the body, do I think the kill motion is going to prevail? No, not really, but I do think that we should take a little time and talk about this issue today again. As all of you remember, I attempted, on General File, to provide a phase-in of this for those industries that might be impacted because what we're asking in those cases where perhaps there are limited job opportunities for those employers to be impacted on one day, with a 27 percent increase, in that category of employees if they are, in fact, employing anyone for \$3.35 an hour currently. I have in my file a letter from a young man in opposition to LB 297, and it was a very