

SENATOR ASHFORD: Thank you, Mr. President, and members, I know that there are an awful lot of bills yet to be considered and I know I have a very important bill on Select File that I would like to be considered and that maybe talking about this issue and elongating the debate is certainly maybe counterproductive to getting to debate on those issues. But I think...I've sat in this body for five years, and as an independent small business man who has had a...been in the retail business or at least my family has for a 100 years in the State of Nebraska and I now am in the same retail business that I've been in for that long period of time, a small business, and I've sat here and listened to Bud Robinson's argument given by him and by others and have said very little, have said very little about it. But I don't know how many other retailers there are in this body who...retailers who rely upon, to a certain degree, minimum wage or close to minimum wage employees. But I can tell you the battle lines, Senator Robinson, are not clearly drawn. The battle lines are not clearly drawn. There are lots of businessmen, like myself, my mother, who have a small business who are very...who don't make the kind of money that you're talking about in your amendment but are very willing to pay the kind of wage and more than the kind of wage that is prescribed in the minimum wage law now. But, more importantly than that, I think what we're...the kind of battle line that you're trying to draw is between small business people and the rest of the world, small business people in the urban areas and in the rural areas and small business people and big business people and labor unions and small business people...you're trying to draw these lines and create controversy. The controversy does not exist. You get a few letters from a couple of business people in your district or...and say, gee, we don't want to pay, we don't have enough money to pay this wage and you create a controversy that isn't there and it's...and many senators did it before you did and it's great political fodder to say I fought, I fought for the little businessman. Well, I'm a little business man. I've got all of my money invested in small business and I'm proud to be able to pay this wage. And I'll tell you what, I'm proud to be able to, hopefully, pay more wages, as we all are, who are in small business. That is not the problem. That is not the issue. That is not what makes the economy good or bad. And I guess I just, now that I've started talking and am less upset, but I'm tired of hearing over and over again this...this argument that the small businessman is being mistreated by the minimum wage law and other laws like it. It's just ridiculous. It's bombastic. It is just done for political purposes to play