

with debate, I would like to introduce several guests of the Legislature today. Seated under the north balcony are guests of Senator Withem. They are County Clerk Deb Hoghtaling and Deputy County Clerk Fred Uhe of Sarpy County. Would you please rise and be recognized. Welcome to the Chambers. Also, seated under the north balcony is Dr. Kreikemeier who is a guest of Senator Schellpeper. He is from West Point and on the Cuming County Board of Supervisors. Welcome to the Legislature today. And seated under the south balcony are special guests of Senator Lowell Johnson. They are Christy Meger and children of Fremont, and they are friend of Senator Robinson. Please rise and be recognized. Welcome. Thank you. I will now recognize Senator Hefner.

SENATOR HEFNER: Madam President and members of the Legislature, I know this is rather a complicated issue to probably some of you but let me explain it again. Positive balance employers are subsidizing these negative balance employers millions of dollars a year and I realize that we're not going to do away with this entirely. And I realize that some of these construction companies need help. But my question is, why this much help? Because I think right now it is quite a burden to those positive account employers. As I called your attention to this chart before, you can see that most of the other states surrounding us have changed their rates. The highest one on this chart is Wyoming at just about 10 percent on a \$10,400 base. Whereas, Nebraska is only a 5.4 to a \$7,000 base. South Dakota has got an 8.7 for their negative account employers on a \$7,000 base. But I...I think that we need to address this problem. Senator Withem says, well, this won't bring in very much money and I realize it won't bring in as much as I would like to see it bring it but it will...it will bring in quite a little. This past year, I believe it was in December, the Department of Labor raised the reserve one-tenth of one percent. Now you say, well, one-tenth of one percent isn't very much and I realize that, but it's still something. And why did they raise it, is because they didn't think that our reserve in this fund was enough, especially if we hit a recession where our unemployment goes up. I don't know whether it's enough or not. I understand there's about 135 to 140 million dollars in the fund, but when a lot of employees start drawing from this fund it gets depleted pretty fast. But what I'm trying to say here is that the negative account employers' rates didn't increase any, didn't increase any, where the positive account did. Most of them increased at least one point...or one-tenth of one percent. So I certainly