

there is strong feelings about the bill. There is a strong set of opposition to this piece of legislation, but let me remind you about the support for the bill. There is a profamily medical leave coalition that has been formed last fall. It includes 30 some different organizations, they represent retirees, the elderly, women, disabled individuals, laborers and workers, parents and children, minorities, disadvantaged. There are religious organizations involved concerned with the moral aspects of this issue. There are very, very many people that represent a broad range of individuals in this state, and as I said, polls were taken last fall that indicate 77 percent of Nebraskans support this very bill and the specific provisions of this legislation. But there is more than that. There is a person who has been here, who has experienced the loss of a job as a result of the need for family medical leave, who is a symbol and an example of why we need this legislation. People say, well, why do we need it? What is the need out there? And up in the balcony and in the back, we have seen Sue Gulzow, from Grand Island, who has written you a letter, who has talked about her experience, who has been able to give you a concrete example of what happens to an individual who in the need to have leave to take care of a difficult pregnancy lost her job, had a terrible impact on her life over a period of years, and is now trying to recover and is recovering from that experience. And there are many, many Sue Gulzows, individuals who are in the process of caring for a child, caring for a parent, delivering a child, for many other reasons have the need for leave from their job and not to lose that job as a result of needing that leave. We can take a step forward. We can take a step forward, not a leap forward, a very small step forward, by supporting LB 145, and I am embarrassed to even bring you this legislation, as small and modest as it is. Because we are talking about leave that is without pay, we are talking about leave that is without benefits, that if you want benefits, if you want your health care to continue during the leave, you have got to pay the full premium, and any other benefits you have, if you want to continue them, you pay the full cost. Now how many people out there are going to be able to afford that when they lose their salary through the leave that they are taking? It is going to be tough, but we ought to give that opportunity to employees. If they need...if they must take that choice, they ought to be given the opportunity. Now if you look at that set of proposal versus the federal, there they are talking about federal legislation having an employer provide for the benefit, if you take a leave. In the federal, they are talking about 50 or more