

increase the costs of these programs, so I hope, given that we don't have a fiscal note, an accurate fiscal note, you will make a decision based on whether you want to make this policy change, one, but we should have these figures in front of us when we're being asked by Senator Wesely to make these policy changes. It's not just something that you feel should be done or want to be done or wish could be done, it's something that we're, as responsible legislators, supposed to make a decision based on facts and figures. It isn't necessarily something that in your heart but sometimes in your head that you have to make because that's where we're having the most problems...

SPEAKER WITHEM: Time.

SENATOR WITEK: ...is on spending.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. President, Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, one of the difficulties in talking about this particular issue is that the standard of need is not the same as the poverty level. The poverty level established by the federal government is higher than the standard of need. The standard of need is a term we're talking about which is below, far below the level of poverty. Senator Maurstad correctly, in his questioning of Senator Wesely, pointed out that if you raise the standard of need, which tells you when people are eligible to receive some assistance, more people may be made eligible. That's the front end, but here's what you have to look at on the back end if this bill is designed to encourage women to go to work. If she gets a minimum wage job, paying 4.25 an hour, and that's what most of these women are going to get, and works 40 hours a week and she has two children, what she earns on that minimum wage job will cause her to lose her eligibility because it's more than a 185 percent of the standard of need. To say it another way, a woman who gets a minimum wage job is going to be rendered ineligible for assistance, so there is no incentive to work, but if we raise the standard of need, even if we don't increase the actual payments, this woman when she takes a job can earn more money before being knocked off and made to lose all benefits. So if we're trying to encourage women to work without our even spending more money, if we raise the standard of need, all we do is let her stay eligible while being a member of the working poor. But if to take one of these minimum wage jobs is going to take away all of her cash benefits, why should