

SENATOR LINDSAY: Thank you, Senator Chambers. Senator Witek. Senator Witek, did you wish to speak to the Chambers amendment?

SENATOR WITEK: I will. Thank you, Senator, I will because I oppose both the Chambers amendment and this portion of the Bohlke amendment. And I knew as soon as I found some area that I didn't like, that Senator Chambers would be in here fighting for it. I disagree with the language in this, and I disagree with the concept, and to me it seems like we are going a little bit overboard. First of all, I don't think it has a place in welfare reform. It really is separate from what we are trying to do. We're trying to change some of those areas in the Department of Social Services that deal with those individuals who receive these monies from the state. And I understand the tie that they are making to the job training programs and that effort, and I support that effort. But I don't understand why we're going to involve another group of people, the Governor's Roundtable, and continue this, and then have them go with the Department of Labor, and it says the Department of Labor shall study and make recommendations on adjusting the minimum wage in Nebraska. Like we are going to adjust the minimum wage in Nebraska if the Department of Labor comes and tells us it is too low. Of course, they are going to come and tell us it is too low. They are always coming and telling us it is too low. All I heard out of the...a lot of this welfare reform was that living wage, they have to make a living wage, and I think it was an article in the Omaha World-Herald that said that all...if you took all of the benefits that an individual could receive, it was like equal to \$23,000 a year, and I remember hearing people saying you can't take people off of welfare unless we can make sure that they have a living wage. So I know those individuals who aren't maybe as serious about having some kind of welfare reform use these kinds of Catch-22s that we put in these bills to say we can't take individuals off welfare unless we make sure they have a living wage. And then they will have the Department of Labor come in and say, well, the minimum wage isn't a living wage, so we have to increase...you know, it kind of keeps you going around in a circle with all of these reform ideas. So I disagree with this section of the Bohlke amendment, and for the Chambers amendment to bring it in by December 1st, 1996 is just part of the Bohlke amendment. It just makes it so that there is a date certain. I hope that individuals will at least consider voting against this because I see no reason why we should instruct our Department of Labor in Nebraska to go out and study