

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Chambers. Senator Brashear, followed by Senators Schimek, Wesely, Maurstad, Abboud, Crosby, Chambers, and Engel, and I would remind members that we are discussing the Brashear amendment to the committee amendment. Senator Schimek, you're recognized to speak.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the body. I'm sorry I missed the first part of the discussion this afternoon so I really don't know exactly how much has been talked about before, but I am rising in opposition to the Brashear amendment, not philosophically in opposition to the Brashear amendment because I have always wondered why certain groups were exempt from the minimum wage and have always felt that we ought to look into that, but that's a major policy change that I think ought to be subject to the public hearing process and that ought to be the prerogative of citizens to come in and comment on. I am in support of the Wesely amendment. I am a cosponsor of the Wesely amendment and I...and my only hesitation on the whole thing is it's not enough. I mean it's such a "piddily" little bit of a raise that, you know, I'm almost tempted, Senator Wesely, to vote against it for that reason, but of course I won't because I think that anything that we can do at this point is, as you mentioned, part of our compact on working on the welfare issue in this state. And, you know, I don't know if anybody's commented on it or not, Senator Wesely, but I am highly incensed regarding the letter that you got from our State Auditor and I don't even think it's...it's hardly worth...worthy commenting on because the assertions are so ridiculous in that letter. It's, I mean...but I'm...I have to say in your defense that you have certainly always been in favor of improving the lot of people who do not make enough to support themselves or their families; that you are consistent on that, you've always been consistent on it and I think that you worked hard on the bill last...in the last couple of years, actually, to see that welfare recipients do have a chance to get off of welfare. I mean that...I mean you deserve to be defended on that and, frankly, I think that's just a bunch of political garbage that the Auditor put out. But having said all those rash and crazy things, I just think that I, Senator Brashear, I imagine I'll be supporting this bill, but this bill could be immeasurably better if we adopt the Wesely amendment and I would just encourage everybody to seriously consider it. It shouldn't be just a discussion on the policy, but it should be a serious