

awhile. Senator Lynch, you remember. Senator Lynch, it was like two or three dollars an hour I think we were paying for personal care aides. It was unbelievable, and Senator Lynch and I introduced legislation to increase that and we were able to get it above the minimum wage and now there will be an additional increase done administratively. But there are examples of where we have failed to provide decent wages to people doing important work and so that is, in fact, a legitimate issue and worth looking at. I think it's also kind of interesting, the figures. As we're talking about agriculture, let me mention one thing. We have 47th in wages, averages wages in the state, which means people are not getting paid well for working. And I think as, you know, we've mentioned welfare reform and the vast majority of Nebraskans view welfare rather negatively in many ways. They have stereotypes that I believe are not accurate. One of those people that has an inaccurate stereotype is our State Auditor, who should know better. But, nevertheless, the attacks on welfare have come from various corners of the state, but I think everybody's in agreement that if you're out there working, if you are trying to earn a living, you should have a decent wage for that effort; that if you are out there trying to raise a family that we ought to be doing something to work to accomplish decent wages and benefits for individuals. And being 47th in the country should raise an alarm for all of us, if that's where we're at. But it's kind of interesting, if you look at income levels you'll find that our median income in this state is closer to the middle, about 28th I think in the country, so I ask the question, how could our wages be so low but our income relatively moderate? And the answer is that we include farm subsidies and transfer payments as part of income and that's what brings us up. So all these folks out there...and there are other reasons as well, another one being that we have I think if not the highest, one of the highest rates of both parents of families working in the work force of any state in the country. This is a hard-working state. These are people that believe in work and trying to earn their way. And so when you have low wages you end up forcing families, many times with children, into the work force with both parents working to try and make ends meet. In many cases, they would prefer not to be in that situation. In my own family that's exactly the case. But because of the wage levels that we have, in order to raise a family you have to have a decent income, and to get a decent income in a state with such low wages you need both parents