

working. That has forced a child care consequence...

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.

SENATOR WESELY: ..and other consequences as well. But again, in my view, we need to try to understand that wages are low in this state, despite the low unemployment, despite the strong economy. We are benefitted greatly by federal farm subsidies and transfer payments as well as some other factors that has our income up a little bit and that's helpful, but the bottom line problem that we've got are wages, poor wages, poor benefits and, if ever we're to reward the working people of this state, this is that moment, this is that time. And I oppose the Brashear amendment. I understand what he's trying to do. I oppose that. But I think the fundamental point of what we're trying to do is to raise that...the bottom and hopefully have that elevate others along the line to get better wages in the state of Nebraska. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Oh, I get to call on somebody else, don't I? Senator Maurstad.

SENATOR MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can understand the reluctance to call on me. (Laugh) I just want to rise and make some general comments about the minimum wage and particularly one of the statistics that's been cited showing Nebraska as the 47th ranking state relative to average minimum wage and then correlating that to an indication that we have low wages in Nebraska. First of all, there's not a great deal of variance, if you'll look at the overall chart. The 25th state, which happens to be Oregon, is at a level that's about a dollar more per hour average than Nebraska, so between 25th and 27th (sic) you have about a 10 percent variance within all of those states. And when you consider the definite difference in the cost of living across those states, it really becomes a very small, very small difference. That was the first point I want to make. Second point, we are in fact, according to this particular ranking, 47th, but that 47th ranking is based upon an average hourly wage of \$10.22, which I don't think anybody would classify as a low wage. And so I think that we need to keep in mind that the 47th ranking, in this particular case, has very little to do with our minimum wage. Which gets me to my final point, and that being that right now, except in some of the rural areas and the smaller communities of the state, that