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LB 925

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Senator Kremer. Further debate on AM2504, Senator Wickersham, followed by Senators Landis, Beutler, Brown, Raikes and Jensen. Senator Wickersham.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Mr. President, a couple of things come to mind. We have Senator Suttle, Senator Stuhr admitting that the problem is low wages. The real problem is low wages. People don't get paid enough to afford child care services. Why don't they get paid enough to pay child...to pay for child care services? I don't know. This is a...this is a state that, as I have noted, has had for several years very, very low unemployment. So why aren't people being paid a decent wage? Why can't they afford child care services? I don't know. But I don't think it's our responsibility to contribute to a corporation or other business's costs so the child care services can be provided. It looks to me like that's a legitimate employee fringe benefit that could be provided by the company. And by the way, if the company included that kind of a fringe benefit in a cafeteria plan, it could be provided to the employees without tax consequences. No need for the credit that Senator Landis talked about where a company doesn't provide a benefit and the individual has to pay the child care costs themselves and then get a credit against their state income tax. Senator Landis indicated that in order to...in order for his bill to work that the company had to provide the benefit to employees, the child care benefit to employees free. I don't think that's what the bill says, Senator Landis. I don't think there is any requirement in this bill that the benefit the employ...be provided to the employees for free and, in fact, I think the reverse is true, that the employees could wind up paying for all of it. Of course, then in that case there wouldn't be anything to get a credit for I think, but even that isn't entirely clear. I'm afraid that there is a better approach to this child care issue, and it is outlined a little bit in an amendment that Senator Raikes will offer. You'll see it on your computer. It's AM2822. Instead of an additional incentive in the form of additional money that Senator Suttle is suggesting in her amendment, Senator Raikes would say, quite sensibly, if you don't offer a high level of services, you don't get as big a credit. Now that seems to me a far more sensible way to go. Instead of piling on, why not kind of start at the