

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

March 20, 2003 LB 608

you have the federal average you have sort of a constant throughout, and that we're trying not to scare people off, quite frankly, from looking at us. So, but the thought here, as expressed in the committee amendments, that if we don't put a federal...or don't put a wage limitation in this that the employees will be taken advantage of, that has not been the case. I would like to submit to you the experience that we had just very recently in North Platte. I alluded to this earlier. In 2001, the Wal-Mart Distribution Center was looking to locate in among about a four-state area, and North Platte got involved in that discussion. And, ultimately, although the primary business area that is being served by this new Wal-Mart Distribution Center is primarily in eastern Colorado, and it came down to being between North Platte, Pueblo, and east Denver, and it ended up that they chose to come to North Platte. Now did they choose to come to North Platte because of the low wages that Senator Landis has alluded to? Not at all. In fact, what happened in North Platte is that we've had over 3,000 applicants for jobs for that particular location. There will be, ultimately, 600 jobs in North Platte. This is the kind of business that we need in this state and they did not...they did not come here because of the low wages. In fact, their wage picture in North Platte through the Wal-Mart Distribution Center is \$11 an hour as the minimum, and \$12.35 an hour. So if you put that into an average, the lower segment of that would be \$22,880, whereas, under Senator Landis' proposal, it would be \$18,096. So they didn't come here because of our low wages. They came here because they felt that it was a business opportunity for them and that we just made a better package for them. That is what LB 775 is supposed to do. That's why we wanted it. That's why it has come to Nebraska and has been a big benefit. Now the average wage in the North Platte area is probably somewhere between 7 and 8 dollars, if you exclude the Union Pacific, which is very high wages, and the hospital. So, anyway, that's the criteria. So that's why about 3,400 people have been applying for this job and it's within a 75-mile radius around North Platte that they are asking to come there and be considered for that employment. So this is why we do need development in Nebraska. And, believe me, it's not because of the wage. And in addition to the \$11 and \$12.35 an hour for the wage, it's also full benefits, including health and all of the