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FLOOR DEBATE

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SENATOR KRUSE: ...will do the most to boost our economy. I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Kruse. Senator Don Pederson on AM0883.

SENATOR D. PEDERSON: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, it's interesting that now we have reached a point where previously we had no standard, and now if we adopt a base standard it's going to devastate the bill. Now, that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. We have been getting along just fine with LB 775. The committee wanted to establish a criteria. I really don't...I'm not bothered by setting a criteria that will affect the more urban area of the state. I think whether that's too low, I have no idea. But I do know that we need to recognize the disparity between the more urban areas and the more rural areas of our state. I have circulated among you the breakdown from the Nebraska Workforce Development, and you will see that there is a huge disparity between Douglas County, Lancaster County, drop on to Wayne. We're talking several hundred dollars a week on a wage differential. And I think that the committee amendment does not recognize that differential. Now, Senator Hartnett mentioned the bill that was passed several years ago for rural economic development, and said that unfortunately the standards, people complained, were set too high. Well, the reality of that is that there was never an application made for anybody to obtain benefits under that rural economic plan, because it was unworkable. The standards were set too high for the economic development in the smaller communities. So what are we trying to accomplish? I think that we need to recognize that by the proposal that I'm submitting, I am saying that this is not the maximum that people will pay for jobs; I'm trying to say, let's set a floor for this. Now, where that floor is set is up to this body. I am proposing a differential, 140 percent of federal minimum for the rural areas, and 160 percent of the more urban areas. So I think it's a matter for you to consider. Really, we have not done very badly under LB 775. We've had good development. I don't know why we're debating what should be a minimum wage in the state of Nebraska or in the United States. That's not the issue. The issue is economic development. And I am submitting that