

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

March 25, 2003 LB 608

two hundred and some dollars less than what they make in Omaha. But I don't think I can live in Omaha. Well, that's what the market is telling us. I could live in Omaha for another two hundred and some dollars a week. But I don't think that too many people are going to be running to Omaha for that \$200. They'd rather live in rural Nebraska. And if we can get this thing workable, which the Pederson amendment does do, why, then I think we're making progress, because we've already been where we're... people saying, let's stay with the committee amendment. We've been there and done that, and it hasn't worked. So history is on our side. Another issue that has cropped up... and I... serving on Revenue, I know Senator Landis is going to ask me why I didn't make this issue before. But when we... our employees and our health insurance plans out there, I really wonder what the Department of Revenue, and consulting... and this is on page 18 of the committee amendment... how we're going to come about with an average plan sponsored by private employers in Nebraska. I know that Senator Dwite Pedersen brought this up. I'm not quite sure what we're going to end up with there. As an employer out there, 20-some employees in our business, I'm not sure that this is what we want to do. I'm not sure it's going to be workable. It goes back to Senator Tyson's comments. Let the market set wages. And that's what we do. We don't pay anyone minimum wage out in our business. We're not even close to minimum wage. We couldn't hire anybody at minimum wage. And then they say, well, why don't we go ahead and adopt this higher wage? Well, let's let the market set the wage that we have to pay to these people out there. And I think this is a compromise. This 140 percent of minimum wage is fine. I think that's probably about where we are out there. It's workable. I think he's picked some of these numbers up from Department of Economic Development. In all honesty, they've been very helpful, DED has, out there in recruiting our plants that we have out in western Nebraska that do access LB 775. So I think we're overlooking the insurance issue in the bill, maybe as big an issue as the wages. And I just kind of am beginning to think maybe we had ought to stay away from private employers in Nebraska, letting Department of Revenue insurance in collaboration with the two of them develop rules and regulations setting out the insurance requirements. I think that could be quite an ornery situation, a bad situation to get into.