

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

April 15, 2003

LB 435

I vote on this bill does not mean that I have a bad opinion of poor people, or that I think that this is going to make a huge impact. I think that in my district and other places around, there are places where the primary wage earners can earn a decent living wage with benefits, perhaps not at all the jobs, but there are entry level jobs. That's what these guys were doing. That's what we're talking about are entry level jobs. Joe's Place in Dorchester, that guy is going to be negatively impacted; the supermarket in Friend, all the little supermarkets around, and we've already heard about that impact. I just...I have a bad feeling about doing this simply to...that the impact is going to be...to make a big difference in the lives of the neediest people. We do have programs to help them and I'm just not totally convinced that the small businesses can take that right now. There are also union shops around that pay, I know in my district, unskilled people, people who can't even speak English, they go and they make \$12 to \$15 an hour at Farmland. Or they can go to Alpo Friskies or other places that perhaps maybe even pay \$8 or \$9 an hour. The jobs, at least in my district, that seem to pay the minimum wage or that level are in restaurant-type businesses, and even the restaurant businesses are paying more than that. Even the car wash here in Lincoln, the guys washing cars, are starting out higher than minimum wage. I know I don't speak for every district in the state of Nebraska, but I do have to bring to the floor what my constituents have brought to me, and those are people in my district. I know it's not popular when we're talking about, you know, rich versus poor, and I'm sorry that it gets down to that level of discussion. However, I think we need to look at the whole picture, all the resources available for the poor outside the minimum wage. We have Blue Valley Community Action. We have a lot of things that are "hand ups" for people, not handouts. And I don't see minimum wage as a handout.

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR COMBS: It is to help the working people. I understand the premise behind it and perhaps there will be a better time but do we need to exceed the federal minimum when our...what given the cost of living is on the average in Nebraska? So I'm still listening to debate, and I certainly don't think any less