

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

February 10, 2004 LB 1049

is still putting in applications, but the job market being what it is, it was difficult for her to find employment. She did have to wait ten weeks before she got unemployment benefits. And I'm going to talk in a minute about what those benefits are. Somehow, we think that there's this huge windfall, that someone on unemployment is getting rich. But the reality is, it's only a couple hundred dollars a week. I guarantee you that these people are not putting money away in the bank. They're simply paying their bills. Anyway, what happened to my constituent, she was terminated in mid-summer, and waited 10 weeks, which is, what, two and a half months. In the meantime, she's behind on her rent, the utilities threatened to cut her utilities off. And I will tell you that the utilities up in Omaha, OPPD and MUD, were very helpful in working with her. They did not cut her off; they worked with her, I think with my assistance, and put her on a payment plan. Once she got on unemployment, after 10 weeks, now she's making payments to pay those bills back. But what my point is, is that Senator Cunningham, while I understand exactly what he's trying to do--and at a certain level it makes sense that if somebody is fired, say they're doing their job poorly, why should they be able to get unemployment after seven weeks...or why should they be able to get unemployment right away? Maybe there should be a disincentive to wait 13 weeks. Maybe if we made them wait 13 weeks and they realize that they might lose their cars and their homes and not be able to pay their bills, maybe that would be an incentive for them to be a good employee and not be terminated for misconduct. I don't know. But I want to articulate to you what happened to my constituent. She almost lost her home. Utilities were threatened to be cut off. She couldn't pay her bills. And she still...and she's put in application after application. But I'll tell you, as a 52-year-old woman without a lot of employment skills, it's difficult to find a job. If it had not been for the unemployment that finally kicked in after ten weeks, she would have lost her home. And I don't think that's insignificant. While I certainly understand what Senator Cunningham is trying to do, I'm struggling, because I think he snares people that are perhaps terminated for a reason that really...now, maybe it was this lady's fault. I did say that she was kind of obstinate, and maybe that was a little harsh. And by that I meant, maybe she could have, you know, been more