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introduced.) Senator Bourne.

SENATOR BOURNE: Thank you, Mr. President. Members, I want to kind of follow-up and clarify on the discussion that Senator Vrtiska had with Senator Chambers, and I've got a 2003 estimated employer cost per employee that was put out by our Department of Labor. Nebraska is 42nd in the country in terms of the cost to the employer per employee, at \$119 per year. And I listened to Senator Baker talk about the thousands of dollars he spends on unemployment premiums, and just to bring this into perspective, employers spend .02 percent of total covered wages. That was a 2001 figure. Let me give you this. A Nebraska employer with a payroll of \$1 million on an annual basis would pay \$2,000 per year. An annual payroll of \$1 million per year; that employer will pay \$2,000 for this under...unemployment insurance premium. Compare that to Iowa. An Iowa employer with \$1 million payroll annually would pay \$7,000. One million dollar payroll here in Nebraska, two thousand dollars per year is what the employer pays for premium; and in Iowa they would pay seven thousand. I'll give you comparisons. The state of Iowa, the estimated employer cost per employee is \$288. Again, Nebraska's is 42nd at \$119 per year. That's ten...what is that, Senator Cunningham? It's a little over \$10 a month per employee. The state of Kansas estimated employer costs per year is \$200, Missouri is \$142, and again, Nebraska is \$119. Is this a cost to employers? Absolutely. I am of the opinion we should do everything we can to reduce costs to our employers to stimulate economic development, to encourage employers to locate here, to remain here, things of that nature to stimulate our economy. However, I don't think it's unreasonable that an employer pays .02 percent of the total covered wages to provide benefits for those people who are without a job for 26 weeks. I don't think that's unfair. I don't think that's unreasonable. And I'll tell you that you can look at my record as it relates to supporting business here in this state. I have always supported LB 775. I even voted against Senator Beutler's minimum wage increase because I think that, to a certain extent, the market should dictate that. But I do believe a program such as this is absolutely vital. I think it protects those people who most need protecting at a very minimal cost to employers. We are 42nd in the entire country in terms of what it costs our