

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

February 24, 2004 LB 1049

employers. Is it a cost? Yes, it is. Could we or should we reduce it? I suppose, if we can find a fair way to do that, but I don't think that's an inappropriate cost whatsoever. Average weekly benefit here...amount here in Nebraska is \$208. And again, put yourself in the position of these people that Senator Cunningham is, I don't want to say targeting, but categorizing. First, could you have...could you exist in your present situation with no income for 13 weeks? I don't know about you, but I would struggle to go without an income, without any money coming in the door for 13 weeks. And what we're saying is what you're going to do is deny them \$200 a week. That isn't probably even enough money to keep yourself under...with a roof over your head and feed your children and that. Again, I think that this is a modest amount that employers are paying, and I don't think that it's inappropriate. We show some concerns over the trust fund, when...

SENATOR CUDABACK PRESIDING

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR BOURNE: ...in actuality the assessment, as I understand it, was lowered some years ago because people weren't being unemployed, and the employers asked for the appropriation to be reduced, or the assessment to be reduced, and it was. And now here, when we're having tough economic times, more people are becoming unemployed, now is when they want to exclude people from getting the benefits. And again, I want to talk about the economic stimulus provided by unemployment insurance and, again, nobody seems to be discussing this. Senator Cunningham all but dismisses it. But when you talk about the unemployment insurance package, you have to talk about both sides of it, the stimulus provided by it. Economists, in general, agree that UI programs help the economy. A study by the United States Department of Labor, in 1999, found that UI benefits produce \$2.15 of increased economic activity for every \$1 in UI benefits paid to jobless workers. We talk all the time about stimulus components, about packages, about LB 775 and the...

SENATOR CUDABACK: Time.