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FLOOR DEBATE

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nonwork-related/connected illness or injury; (C) left work voluntarily with good cause to escape abuse under Section 428 (sic), Section 7 of this amendment; has left work from which the employee was discharged for misconduct connected with his or her work or left work voluntarily in accordance with (3) or (5) under Section 7 above; and the employer has filed timely notice of the fact on which such exemption is claimed. So, as you can see, this was addressed. How much time to I have, Mr. Speaker?

SENATOR CUDABACK: About two and a half minutes.

SENATOR COMBS: Two and a half minutes, okay. We did attempt to address this and, as he said, we did have business and labor together. There has been give and take with this, and there's been several meetings where these issues have all been discussed. Particularly encouraging to me was the codification of good cause quits, because many times employees do leave their jobs for reasons that are beyond their control that is not misconduct and is not just quitting, but it is for good cause. Before, the only one that was codified is domestic abuse, and now we've added all the others, which I think helps protect the employee in the situation. We also have protected the employer who, up until this time, has been unfairly charged for people who have been fired for misconduct for reasons other than listed, or just leaves and quits. So, again, we are trying to be fair to both sides with this. And I was looking at the picture here that was just distributed. The Unemployment Trust Fund and target reserve as Senator Cunningham had mentioned, it began to decline severely here. Here's where we should be, is the brown line. Look at the sharp decline that it's taken. And in the last two years, from 2001, the end of that to now, clear down here. The fund will be insolvent and unable to pay benefits if we do not do this in two years. So employees that are entitled to unemployment insurance will not be able to receive anything if we do nothing at this point. That's why it's so critical that we are engaged in this conversation, that we pay attention to what the committee is trying to do here, and that everyone understands the critical nature of what we need to do to protect employee's benefits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.