

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 312

SENATOR CUDABACK: Any objection? So ordered.

CLERK: Can I get the number again, Senator, please? AM16 what?

SENATOR BEUTLER: AM1622, Mr. Clerk.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Senator Beutler, you're recognized to open.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Members of the Legislature, the last amendment had to do with the required wage structure. And the other part of the bill that's been troublesome to me, and I think to others, has to do with healthcare, and the question of whether companies who are benefiting from these incentives should be required to provide healthcare. As you know...and I'll follow through with some materials shortly, but as you know, healthcare is an increasing problem in the United States, in Nebraska. And we have roughly 10 percent of our people--that is, our people of working age and their children--who are uninsured. That results in tremendous costs to the public, to the taxpayer, through the Medicaid program, and through subsidies on their own insurance rates. So what this amendment does is to structure a requirement for a healthcare plan, or, if you choose not to have a healthcare plan, to pay a certain amount of money into a healthcare fund which could then be used to take care of people who don't, or are unable to, get healthcare benefits through their employers. Here's the way it would work. First of all, it indicates that there is an exemption to the requirement of this amendment. It says, this section does not apply to an employer whose healthcare benefits are substantially comparable, as determined by the Tax Commissioner, to those offered to employees of the state of Nebraska for calendar year 2004, if the employer is paying at least 79 percent of the cost of the benefits. The state of Nebraska pays 79 percent of the cost of healthcare for state employees. So it first of all says, with regard to any of these companies that are taking advantage of the Nebraska Advantage Act, it says, if you have a healthcare policy that's substantially comparable to the state healthcare policy, and you're paying the same as the state pays, or better, with respect to the cost of that policy, then you're all right. You don't have to do anything further. If, on the other hand, they don't have healthcare benefits, then the bill would require