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FLOOR DEBATE

March 29, 2006 LB 554

of 2008; and then the last change, it will go to \$6.46 on and after October 1 of 2008. The calculation, if you're interested in reviewing how it was done, is laid out for you here on the concept sheet. I think everything else is the same and as explained to you by Senator Cunningham except, just as we added a year to the basic minimum wage, of course we also added a year to the training wage, to correspond to that additional year change. So I think that pretty much describes what the bill does, and I would ask for your favorable consideration.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Beutler. You've heard the opening on the Beutler amendment to the committee amendments to LB 554. Open for discussion. Senator Redfield, followed by Senator Schimek and others.

SENATOR REDFIELD: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. I actually want to address the whole package that's here before us, because I think there is something very significant that the committee amendment has removed from the bill, and that was the treatment of those who were under 17 years of age. And I have distributed to you a chart that actually comes from the economic indicators from the 109th Congress; this is dated February, 2006. And if you look at the unemployment rate for teenagers ages 16 to 19, you'll see that it is over three times higher than that of workers who are 20 years old or older. Why is that important to me? Well, it's important to me for a number of reasons, because if you read the want ads for people looking for employees, they usually say they want experience. It's very, very difficult to get experience if you can't get the first job, and it's very difficult to get the first job if in fact the employer doesn't feel that you're going to bring them enough benefit to justify their cost. And while I am a cosponsor of the bill and I support raising the minimum wage, I think that we need to be cognizant of what we may be doing here in Nebraska to our young people who are trying to get that very first job that's going to give them some experience, so that they can move on down the ladder and improve their lot in life, and be able to demonstrate that they have a work ethic and that they have an employment record that is going to find favor in the next job down the road. So I think that's a significant piece, and it concerns me that the committee has omitted that