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FLOOR DEBATE

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because I thought perhaps we'd gone a little too far in pushing our businesses to come up with the wherewithal to reward their employees with a wage that we think reflects today's economy, reminding you that we have not raised this wage for a long time, and that the costs of everything that these people buy has gone up year by year. Just look at the cost of the natural gas, look at the cost of gasoline. Getting to work is costing them more. The second thing that the bill does is it puts back in the federal minimum wage for those who are under 17 years of age. I think that's important, because if you look at the unemployment rate for those who are 16 to 19 in our state, you see that it is very, very high, and we want to make sure that we move these people smoothly into our work force, that they can establish that they have the skills and the values to be a responsible employee, a dependable employee, and that they can establish that work record and work their way up the ladder. So we put that back in, and that was something that I promised you that I was going to bring. What is not there that I did tell you I was going to bring, however, was the impact on state employees and local employees of government subdivisions. And Senator Beutler actually prevailed upon me, because he thought that perhaps we would encounter a great deal of opposition from many of the organizations, like the League of Municipalities and NACO, not because they're not facing the market crunch and having to compete for employees today just as all businesses do, but the fact that there are some variances across our state, where in some of our counties the wage has really not moved that far ahead. Certainly in the metropolitan areas you're seeing people tell us that they can't find someone to work for them for \$5.15, so I think that this addresses a number of the things, and I just wanted to verify with the Clerk, because I had brought an amendment up there today, and I want to make sure that the number that is before us right now is the one that I brought up to you this morning. Senator Cudaback, can you verify that?

SENATOR CUDABACK: Are you through with...are you through, Senator?

SENATOR REDFIELD: I wanted to verify this was the amendment that I brought up this morning.