

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office

Floor Debate February 5, 2026

Rough Draft

KELLY: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the twenty-first day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, Second Session. Our chaplain for today is Bob Gannon, Pleasant View Bible Church, Aurora, Nebraska, in Senator Lippincott's district. Please rise.

BOB GANNON: Let's pray. Dear Lord Jesus, through whom and for whom were created all things, who is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding on our behalf, full of grace and truth. Thank you for each of these men and women elected as senators to serve the people of this great state of Nebraska, servants ordained by you, Lord, who are to be vessels of restraint against all evil. For your word says, righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. Lord, you are sovereign over all your creation, and there is nothing that slips by without your notice. Therefore, grant humility to each public servant of this state, and especially these senators, for Romans says, for there is no authority except from God. Those that exist have been instituted by God. You, Lord, have instituted the Unicameral as a part of your governing authority of this great state, and may the citizens of this state not resist the authorities that you, Lord, have appointed. And to you, Father, I pray that you would give each senator a measure of your grace and mercy as they introduce legislation, debate back and forth, may they retain respect for one another and embrace each other, for each one is a precious creation of yours, created after your own image. Would you, by your spirit, lead, guide, and direct them? I pray that you would grant them your wisdom, because Proverbs says, where there is no guidance, a people falls. But in an abundance of counselors, there is safety. May that be true of these senators today and in the remainder of this session. Lord, I pray that each one in this building may know your steadfast love and obtain your mercy and grace through the cross of Jesus Christ. For your glory and the glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

KELLY: I recognize Senator DeBoer for the Pledge of Allegiance.

DeBOER: Colleagues, please join me in the Pledge. I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

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KELLY: I call to order the twenty-first day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, Second Session. Senators, please record your presence. Roll call. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: There's a quorum present, Mr. President.

KELLY: Are there any corrections for the Journal?

CLERK: I have no corrections this morning, sir.

KELLY: Are there any messages, reports, or announcements?

CLERK: There are, Mr. President. Your Committee on Enrollment and Review reports LB783, LB836, LB741, LB751, and LB795 to Select File, LB836 having E&R amendments. Additionally, committee reports concerning gubernatorial appointments from the Revenue Committee and the Natural Resources Committee; notice of committee hearing from the Revenue Committee; communication from Senator Meyer designating LB988 as his personal priority for the session, LB988, Senator Meyer's personal priority bill. That's all I have at this time.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Lippincott would like to recognize a guest under the north balcony. It's Kerry Gannon of Aurora, the wife of Pastor Bob Gannon. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Glen Meyer would like to recognize the physician of the day, Dr. Dave Hoelting of Pender, Nebraska. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. And Senator Glen Meyer would like to recognize his brother, DeLloyd Meyer Jr., under the north balcony. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Mr. Clerk, we will move to Final Reading. Members should return to their seats in preparation for Final Reading.

CLERK: Mr. President, engrossed LB258, Senator Raybould would move to recommit the bill to committee with MO323.

KELLY: Senator Raybould, you're recognized to open.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, fellow Nebraskans watching this debate on TV. I, first of all, want to thank Senator Strommen for prioritizing this bill. I also want to thank Senator Ballard for his quick thinking on the reconsideration. I want to thank the Business and Labor Committee and Senator-Chair Kauth for their support in the past for this legislation. You know, over, over the last 2-3 years, we have heard from businesses large and small, retailers, fast food, convenience

stores, daycare centers, families with children in daycare that can no longer afford it, nonprofits, home health providers, dog groomers, yoga studios, just to name a few, on how the increases in minimum wage and paid sick leave requirements are impacting how many and who they hire. Unlike other ballot initiatives or referendums approved by the voters, LB258 has not impeded nor delayed any of the voter-approved minimum wage increases, going from \$9 to \$10.50, \$10.50 to \$12, \$12 to \$13.50, and now at \$15 an hour. The process before us, I want to remind you, will require 33 votes for cloture and 33 votes to approve the bill. I now want to spend some time to review the many handouts that highlight the 3 elements of the bill and ask that you pull out the one handout that has all the columns listed on it. The first column and the first element of the bill deals with the CPI cap. The voters of the state of Nebraska voted for a CPI cap in com-- in alliance with the Midwest CPI that changes on an annual basis. Our LB258 proposes, instead of a fluctuating Midwest CPI that can go up as high as 6.5% in 2022, or 8.3, we want something that is fixed and predictable. This is a request from many of the business communities. On the handout in that first column that deals with the minimum wage increase comparison, I show you what LB258 does at 1.75% increase. And you can see what it looks like, all the way to 2045. On the left column to that, it shows what the current CPI, based on December 25, is 2.7%. That's what it is now, and I show you what it looks like if we went with that 2.7% CPI. You can see that they're pretty close and relatively similar in the increases on an annual basis. It is important, and that's what the business community needed, to be able to predict on who they can hire and how many they can hire. The next element is in the middle column. It's a training wage. Now, this is normally considered a routine, statutory cleanup of the old antiquated statute as it now reads. That statute, as it now reads, is a training wage for 16- to 19-year-olds: 90 days at 75% of the federal minimum wage, for 90 days. 75% of \$7.25 federal minimum wage is right around \$4.44 or \$4.47. Nobody in the state of Nebraska pays it. We have a workforce shortage. But the importance is that we clean it up. We remove that old antiquated language. We still keep the 90-day training period. But we change it and tie it into 90% of the Nebraska minimum wage. Nebraska minimum wage is, right now, \$15. The training wage, if people want to embrace it and use it, would be \$13.50. That's a lot more than \$5.47. So I, I think you can readily see it. I think this last element on the youth wage, that was not entertained in the referendum, nor was it discussed. I want to spend some time on it, because I think this is the one that gives people the most concern. This is something that actually, Senator Briese introduced. And I want

to remind my colleagues that those who are opposed to this 14- and 15-year-old wage now had supported this lower wage in the past. And if you sincerely want to keep those 14- and 15-year-olds employed that want to continue to contribute to their family's budget, then you should also be supporting this youth wage. Because why? Economic studies are unanimous on this. So I'm going to have you reference the handout. The youth wage in that final column on the right, it's anticipated to be \$13.50. And remember, you're only 14 for one year and 15 for another year. It's \$13.50, with increases of 1.5% every 5 years. Why? Why is a youth wage a good policy? 14- and 15-year-olds are not entering the workforce with a resume full of skills, and that's exactly the point. Early work experiences teach responsibility, time management, and the basics of showing up and doing the job. If we want young people to develop strong work ethic and practical skills, we have to make sure they have safe, appropriate opportunities to take those first steps into the workforce. Closing the door on early employment does not prepare them for the future. Thoughtful, well-structured opportunities do. This is something that we can all agree on. We agree that we want to continue to have those young people hired and have that opportunity that sets their future up for better opportunities. These young people are already at a disadvantage in hiring based on limits established by the federal government. The research on the impact of rising minimum wage on youth employment is clear, and I'm going to highlight 10 points from that. But I think people that are listening to this on TV, they need to know that 14- and 15-year-olds are restricted, restricted on the number of hours they can work during a school week, they can't work past 7 p.m., and they can work a full day on Saturday, but they're also restricted to the number of hours they can work during a regular work week during the school year. OSHA has severe restrictions and prohibitions for 14- and 15- year-olds to come in contact with any type of sharp equipment. A baler, a combiner, things like that, they are not permitted to that. Every industry throughout the United States has their own specific OSHA guidelines that prohibit 14- and 15-year-olds, and with some lesser restrictions on 16-year-olds, and that's one of the reasons why some people have said, well, you know, you should pay them the same for doing the same work. There are so many prohibitions that many employers have decided not to hire 14- and 15-year-olds. I can tell you that our company hasn't hired 14- and 15-year-olds for the last 15 years, and a number of the other companies won't do the same. This impacts fast food restaurants' drive-thrus. It impacts those young people because they can't touch some of the equipment. Here are some of the highlights of those 10 reasons and-- from the research.

Naturally, if-- in many, if not all the cases, it's the first job for that youth entering the workforce. Allowing employers to continue to hire teenage workers at lower minimum wage makes them more attractive, despite possessing little to no work experience or job skills. One study found that work experience in a formal job during high school corresponds to a 20-25% increase in salary for teens almost a decade later, so it's critical that they be employed. Teens who work during high school learn valuable lessons and soft skills, particularly communication, as so many young people are highly dependent on their, their phones. Over an 18-year period, from 2000 to 2018, the share of employed 16- to 19-year-olds fell from 46% to 30%. And they're citing increase in minimum wage, competition, and more teens focusing on programs and sports. Economic studies are very clear that show minimum wage increases reduced youth employment, correlating to fewer on-the-job training opportunities. You can read all the rest of the highlights, and I've very carefully included all the sources so that you can see that it is important that we continue to make sure that we hire these young people. I want to say, in closing, that I hope you re-- review some of the other documents before you. You know, we had hoped that this reconsideration bill would have been heard last year. We are confident that the employers who have hired 14- and 15-year-olds will maintain them at the current minimum wage, and then going forward, new hires in July will now be at the wage differential. I ask that you kindly review the material in front of you. I certainly ask you to vote for cloture and yes on the bill, and I truly look forward to a respectful dialogue from my, my colleagues today. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Well, I rise in support of the motion to recommit to committee and opposed to the bill. I've been very clear about my opposition to this bill over the many rounds of debate last year, and in any conversation I've had with anyone at any point in time. In 2022, the voters voted to increase the minimum wage in a stepped up, stepped up approach to \$15, and then continue to go up after that, pegged to the Midwest CPI. And so, this is-- that was, was explicitly in the vote, and the voters voted overwhelmingly. It was 58% statewide, but much more in many of our districts. And they voted for that because, as we all know, our country is in an affordability crisis at this point. And an affordability crisis is not just about the inflation in the cost of items, but it has to do with wages not keeping up. So people having a

minimum wage job at this point can't-- don't have the same purchasing power as someone who had a minimum wage job in 1980. And the intention of the voters to increase minimum wage and then have it continue to increase with the rate of inflation was the-- was intended to solve, at least in part, that problem where wages do not keep up with the increase in costs. And so, this Legislature, which has, in so many ways, lost the respect of the people of the state, to the point where there's a ballot initiative directly addressed at this, which is this Legislature undermining the will of the people-- is being circulated right now. You have so many Nebraskans-- the thing we hear is their frustration with this Legislature undermining the will of the people, and this bill is doing just that. The first act of the 2026 Nebraska Legislature to pass on Final Reading will be a bill that undermines the will of the people and lowers wages for Nebraskans. Colleagues, that's what this bill does, lowers wages for Nebraskans. So I'm opposed to this bill because it goes against the will of the people. I'm opposed to this bill because I share the people's intention to increase minimum wages, increase the amount of money that working Nebraskans earn for an honest day's work, and that continues to increase it at the rate that the cost of the items they purchase increases. So, this bill creates a lower arbitrary point at which the minimum wage will go up year over year. But it is lower than the average of that CPI over the previous 50 years or 20 years, and so it is, it is directly at odds with the will of the people. We've had a number of conversations about what it means to change a ballot initiative, and everybody here, when it suits their argument, points to the will of the people and going against it. And my interpretation of that is, there are necessary changes to ballot initiatives. We've done it on casino gambling to give better voice and actual effect to the will of the people. There's been proposals to do it on the medical cannabis to give better voice to the will of the people. We've done it on other items over the years. But when you come in and do a-- something that is directly against what was proposed-- this lowers the amount the minimum wage will go up. The voters passed this ballot initiative specifically to solve the problem of the previous ballot initiative, where minimum wage went up and then didn't go up again. That's what this seeks to solve, and this bill undermines that specific portion. And again, this bill, the first act of this Legislature will be, if you pass this bill, to pass a bill that lowers wages for Nebraskans. Minimum wage is \$15 an hour right now. This bill makes, for some Nebraskans, the minimum wage \$13.50-- lowers the wage by \$1.50 an hour. That cannot be the message that this Legislature sends to Nebraskans as what we prioritize. We have so many other

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important things to work on in this Legislature. We should not be lowering the wages of working Nebraskans in an affordability crisis. So I'm gonna support the motion to recommit. I will not vote for cloture. I would encourage your red vote on cloture and your red vote on the bill. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I also stand in favor of the motion to recommit and opposed to LB258 for a number of reasons. First of all, I just want to start by saying I, I do believe that LB258 does go in the face of the will of the people for a number of reasons, and that's not just something we're saying to score political points. If you listen to your constituents or people who reach out to you-- anybody in this body, I'm sure has received emails, calls, voicemails. You know that the people of Nebraska are opposed to this bill. When this originally passed on the ballot, it had about 60% of the vote of the people. And since then, I know that as we've debated this bill last session and then ultimately have another bite at the apple here this session, I have continued to hear from people in my district and people across the entire state who are frustrated. They're frustrated with the Legislature. They're frustrated that we are taking time, continuing to debate this bill which puts them in a worse position financially when they are in the heart of this affordability crisis. And if any of you have spoken to the folks in your districts, you know that times are tight right now. Things are tough right now, financially. And this Legislature, rather than dealing with that, is continuing to say, we want to lower your wages and we want to increase your taxes. The reason I say that is just yesterday, we had a hearing in the Revenue Committee on a bill that pertained, yet again, to the expansion of the sales and use tax base and implemented 40 new service taxes. And what does that mean? That means that this bill, if proposed, if adopted, would have 40 new industries that would be taxed that are not currently taxed under Nebraska law. And that bill, introduced on behalf of the Governor, seeks to implement new taxes on mom and pop shops and small businesses across Nebraska. And I've now been in the Legislature, this is my fourth session, and if you include the special session, this will be the fifth attempt to expand the amount of taxes on everyday Nebraskans who have these small businesses and are just trying to make ends meet. And we have been able to push back on that, colleagues, in a bipartisan manner every year that I've been here, because there's enough people in this body who understand that that is not what

Nebraskans are asking for right now in the heart of an affordability crisis. People are having trouble making ends meet and nobody, nobody should have to decide between buying groceries that week or maybe taking their kid to the doctor. Nobody should have to come home from one job, take a deep breath, sigh, say hi to their kids, turn around and go to their next job. I believe in having a living wage. I believe in Nebraskans who are hard-working people across this entire state being able to go to work, and then come home at the end of the day after being a hard-working Nebraskan, and be able to have a roof over their head, food on the table, and the security, knowing that they can take their kid to the doctor if they're sick and it's not going to cost them money. And that's what the people of Nebraska voted for. The people of Nebraska understood that our minimum wage was not keeping up with the cost of living, it was not keeping up with the times, and it was important not just to raise that minimum wage, but to ensure that the minimum wage was going to keep up with the cost of living over a period of time. The people of Nebraska voted for an idea, a concept that was both forward-thinking and was supportive of their day-to-day needs. And my concern is that LB258 walks back that vote and it says to the people of Nebraska that we are going to lower your wages and we're going to make it harder for you to make ends meet at the end of the day. Now, I understand that if you look at some of these handouts that have been given-- which I do appreciate. I appreciate the data and I do appreciate the studies we've been given, because I think we can have a good debate about this. I understand that we may be talking about the difference of a few dollars. But for the people that we're talking about, colleagues, a few dollars can make or break somebody's financial situation that week. And in this body, I think we sometimes forget that. I think sometimes we forget the people that we are talking about who are making minimum wage live a very different life than the life of a lot of folks in this room. And it's those people that need to keep in our minds, and it's those people that we need to keep in our hearts as we take a vote on this, because you are not just thinking about your bottom line. We are thinking about the bottom line of Nebraskans who are fighting every single day to make a living, who want to go to work, who want that dignity. And if they're making minimum wage, I don't believe they should be punished for that. I think that they should be given every opportunity to succeed. I'm gonna punch back in. I don't know how much time we're going to have, given the short debate here today. But we know that if you raise minimum wage, it helps the economy writ large by ensuring that there's more money in the economic environment and it raises-- that, that rising tide raises all boats. So colleagues, I do encourage your green

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vote on the motion to recommit and a red vote on LB258. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Dungan. Senator Hunt, you're recognized to speak.

HUNT: Thank you, Mr. President. Nebraska, in the middle of an affordability crisis, the Legislature's first action of 2025 across the finish line is cutting the wage of Nebraska workers. Families are asking us how are they going to keep up with the prices, how are they going to keep up with the cost of living, and we're answering by cutting their paychecks. That's the headline. That's what we're doing. Nebraskans are struggling with rent, groceries, student loans, childcare, property taxes, gas-- and the Legislature's very first bill passed this year? Lowering their wages, after Nebraskans already passed a law to raise them. Groceries cost the same, whether you're 17 or 37. Rent costs the same. Gas costs the same. But this bill says that if you're young, you'll earn a special exploitation wage engineered by Senator Raybould and her allies in the Legislature, who think that your labor is worth less. I know that the argument that people have high costs of living, that that doesn't reach you because you think that people earn what they deserve. And I don't think that it's the most important argument in this debate. I think that the problem is that when we override what voters have already decided, we damage the relationship between the people of Nebraska and their government. Not only is the first action we're taking in this Legislature to cut the wages of Nebraskans who already voted and passed a law to raise them, we're undermining the faith and the trust that they have in the entire democratic process that we are the symbols of-- that they send us here to represent. Democracy depends on a basic promise that if you show up, if you participate, if you cast a vote, if you work to get something done, your voice will matter. And when that promise is broken, people stop believing that the system works for them. They stop showing up, they stop caring, they disengage, and that trust, once we lose it from Nebraskans, from our constituents, is really hard to rebuild. And moments like this that we have this morning, February 5, 2026, as we take the first action on Final Reading in this Legislature, moments like these are exactly how this cynicism takes root. It's exactly how people in Nebraska start to feel like the rules are different for people in power, that the outcomes can be written behind closed doors, and that any of the participation that they're doing as members of the public is just for show, is just going through the motions, that doesn't actually end up mattering. And that kind of disillusionment, that kind of

disengagement that affects the voters when we do this, it's not just confined to one issue. It spreads. It affects everything. It affects how people view elections, election security, public institutions, even their neighbors. It's exactly what is making our politics more brittle, intense, and divided. And you guys are proud to do it. You're proud to pass this exploitation wage after the voters said, did the work, collected the signatures, got it on the ballot, campaigned, voted, and told us that they would like to raise the wage. When this happens, people stop voting, they stop attending meetings, they stop organizing, not because they don't care, but because they think the system isn't here to serve them. And that withdrawal weakens the very foundation of representative government, which relies on an active and involved public to function well. And I think that if we believe in democracy, we have to act like we believe in it, too. That means honoring outcomes that we don't personally like, Senator Raybould. It means honoring outcomes that you think might hurt your small business. And it means understanding that every time we disregard the public's decision, we chip away at the legitimacy of this entire institution. I've been a small business owner for 20 years. And what I can tell you I know for sure is that people spend more money when they make more money. That's why I supported this initiative when it was on the ballot and that's why I oppose LB258. I know what it means to care about your staff and your customers and your community at the same time. When workers earn more, they spend more. And if our strategy for helping businesses is to make it easier for people like Senator Raybould to pay her workers less, then I think we're solving the problem in the wrong way, because you cannot build a strong economy on weak paychecks. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hunt. Senator McKinney, you're recognized to speak.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise in support of the motion to recommit and against LB258. You know, I've been doing my best to stay mellow and within myself as much as possible and not to be gaslit by the activities of the Nebraska Legislature in 2026. But, you know, bills like this really, really get under my skin. We're talking about giving a \$1.50 pay cut to youth, 14 to 15, who just got a pay raise. Then you talk about, oh, these kids don't have skills, and all these other things. What about the kids that have to work to take care of their families? What about the kids that are being affected because their parents unjustly got taken away from them because of ICE, who are legal American citizens that have to now take care of their brothers and sisters? What about them? Oh, they're, they're, they're

just at an age where it just doesn't matter. They should get a pay cut, although they have adult responsibilities. What about the youth who are now, more so than ever, having to keep kids, and having to take care of a kid at that age? Nope, they're not adults. They don't have skills. They-- a mother, no matter if you agree with it or not, at 15, deserves a pay cut. It's, it's just very interesting when, some days, we hear we care about families, we care about kids, we carry about our youth, we care about women, we care about all these things, until it comes to the dollar, the dollar sign. We care about all these things until corporate interests are in the way and it starts to intersect. It's just interesting. And you know, it's not surprising. I mean, this bill was sitting on Final, and then it got prioritized. So, I mean, we're back here. But, I mean, continue with the tone that we set last year. Nebraska Legislature, not for everybody, especially people who are not thought about. And it, it just is what it is, at this point. But, you know, I was looking through-- I, I see these things Senator Raybould passed out to fit her argument. Not sure I agree with any of them-- honestly, none of them. I want to know where did this research from-- come from. There's no cite here. I don't see a cite. This one-- OK. It comes from somebody. Somebody wrote an opinion piece in the World Herald. That doesn't mean that's peer-reviewed and factual. It's, it's just interesting that we supposedly care, but we, we don't care when it, it doesn't align with our business interests. Contrary to popular belief, although I did sponsor the ballot initiative, because people like to use that, I did introduce CAs, but my CAs would put it back to the voters, not the Legislature making a decision without the people. So, you know, it's, it's, it's just interesting, you know. We don't care about people, but we care about people. We care about people, but we don't care about people. We are going to cut the wages of our youth and tell them we care about them and we love them. Although many of them that do work-- and I know kids-- I know a kid that quit wrestling because-- recently, because he has to work to take care of his family, but it's OK. We, we care about kids and we care about our youth. And it's all going to be peaches and cream because you're going to be making more money and your profit lines are going to be better, because we're cutting the wages of kids. That is what is going to occur today and there's no other way to say it. We don't care about our youth. We just want discounted labor. We're not-- I, I thought we wasn't China. I thought wasn't these third-world countries. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator McKinney. Senator DeBoer has some guests in the-- under the north-- in the north balcony, members from the

Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative Rent [SIC] Ambassadors, please stand to be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Good morning, colleagues. I rise in support of the motion to recommit to committee and opposed to LB258. I went to Catholic school. I went to Marion High School in Omaha. I started working when I was 12, babysitting. And by the time I was 14, I was washing dishes in a local reception hall. And then I got a job working at the movie theater, Cinema Center. It's not there anymore. I paid for as much of my high school tuition as I could, and I did the same in college. I was fortunate that that's what my money went towards, that I didn't have to pay for rent or mortgage or food or utilities. But I was able to pay for my education, partially. I'm not sure why my work would have been paid less than the people that were slightly older than me that also worked at the movie theater. That doesn't make any sense to me, and I'm not sure how I'm going to explain that to the kids in my district, especially the ones that are helping take care of their family financially and are not paying for their education, especially those that are here without their parents because they've been ripped from their homes, as Senator McKinney has stated, and now they are the financial resource for their families. We have legislation to cut childcare reimbursement rates. We have legislation and movements to cut SNAP eligibility, we refuse to increase TANF eligibility, we refuse to increase TANF payments. TANF is Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, where it is the poorest of the poor people. We are continuing to make poverty a full-time job. And now, we're saying to people, if you're a specific age, which is discrimination, you're not good enough. You don't deserve the same thing as somebody who's even 6 months older than you, because of your age. We place so much judgment on resources and dollars for poor people. How about we place that judgment on wealthy people? If you are wealthy, how did you get wealthy? Where's your money coming from, and do you care about the people that built your wealth? Because LB5-- LB258 does not care about the people who built your wealth, and who are going to continue to build your wealth. You do not care about them taking care of their families. You do not care about them putting food on the table. You will not support a bill for universal school meals, so those same people have to bring in money to pay for lunch. You do not care about them being able to afford childcare. You do not care about them being able to afford healthcare. You don't care about Medicaid lookback. You don't care about developmental disability services. You care about your wealth, and your wealth is built on the

backs of these people. You should start caring. And to the people of Nebraska who are being impacted by these decisions, it is up to you to do something about it. It is not up to political parties or the media. You need to pay attention, and you need to show up, and you need to vote. Because half of the people in here are either on the ballot or termed out, so you've got an opportunity to change things. A big opportunity. Take advantage of it. Don't listen to the noise. Listen to your pocketbook. Look at what these policies are doing to you, and make your choices accordingly. Because there's nothing I can do for you anymore. I can't inspire you. I can't inspire my colleagues. I can't change their minds. All I can do is beg you over and over and over again to not be complicit in this. Stand up, go to the ballot, and vote for people. Ballot initiatives are just fine and dandy. But as we can see--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

M. CAVANAUGH: --with this bill, it doesn't change anything if we don't have the people. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator Sorrentino, you're recognized to speak.

SORRENTINO: Thank you, Mr. President. We're, we're back to the arguments of will of the people, but I want to pay a little bit of attention to what's-- the handouts that we received a little bit earlier from Senator Raybould. Time and time again, and already several times this session, we've compared our laws and why we should or shouldn't support a ballot measure based on the peers that we have, our state peers. Most often, we use Iowa and Kansas. Those seem to be the most quoted. And if you look at the one handout that has the minimum wage by states and a map of the United States, we see that Iowa and Kansas are both \$7.25. And in fact, if you look at our northern border and go straight down the middle of our country, from North Dakota to Texas: \$7.25, \$11.85, \$15, Nebraska, \$7.25, Kansas, \$7.25, Oklahoma, and \$7.25, Texas. We're not that often compared to our peer states, Colorado and Missouri, totally different tax structures, different economy. They're right up there with us at \$15 at this measure. So if we're going to be fair about comparing ourselves with peers, let's compare ourselves with peers. Secondly, if you look at the handout that-- the information sheet provided by Senator Raybould regarding youth wage, which seems to be a topic of conversation today, \$13.50. That youth minimum wage is higher than nearly every state in our country. That's our youth minimum wage, not

our adult. We're not taking aim at youth in Nebraska. If you look at the states that are higher than Nebraska, Washington, California, New York-- does anybody really want their economy? We may have a \$491 million deficit. I don't want to know what their deficits are. The numbers don't lie. But more importantly, I want to address the senators who talked about will of the people. We beat that horse to death a lot last year. When you have time, I would ask each senator to go back and look at the ballot measure in 2022. And I've got enough time, I think I can read it to you. This is what it asked, as a ballot measure: shall the Nebraska statute establishing a minimum wage for employees be amended to increase the state minimum wage from \$9 per hour-- I'm, I'm paraphrasing here-- to \$10 to \$10.50 in 2023, to \$12 per hour, and then to \$13.50 and then to \$15 by January 1, 2025. That's all it says. I left off two words. What in that ballot measure told you about all the things we discussed this year? We all know in this body how you make a law. Somebody has an idea. They begin to draft it. They talk to subject-matter experts. We go through draft after draft. It goes to the Drafters, and they compare it with state statutes to make sure we're not violating a state statute. We come here, and we have committee meetings. And we get it out of committee. And we come here, and we have General, and Select, and Fin-- it's a process. Not one word in there mentions anything about the process that this state has used for 100 years to make their laws. We think that it's OK to go to Hy-vee parking lots and say, hey, do you want to raise? Sure. And that's how we get to law. Here's what it said about a vote for this: A vote for will amend the Nebraska statute establishing a minimum wage for employees to increase the state minimum wage, et cetera, et cetera. A vote against meets-- means the Nebraska statute establishing a minimal wage for employees will not be amended. Where is all the detail that all of us supposedly smart people in this Legislature go on and on and on about? The initiative process, which I've said more than once, is flawed. It's an opinion poll. We don't make laws on opinion polls in Nebraska. At least I hope we don't. The numbers that Senator Raybould show you do have citations in them. I think they're fairly straightforward. The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics is fairly straightforward, and that talks about all the pr-- the information sheet, from here until 2036. I would suggest we focus on the facts and not the opinion poll. Any time I have remaining, I would give to Senator Raybould. Thank you.

KELLY: Senator Raybould, 34 seconds.

RAYBOULD: Thank you very much. I just want to address Senator Hunt's misinformation. You know, we're not cutting paychecks. Every, every

year, we've seen an increase. We're up at \$15. Next year, guess what? There will be an increase. I think what Senator Hunt isn't aware is that there's wage compression. So if you currently are-- were making minimum wage, with that increase, you're being bumped up. So every boat does rise in this case, in the state of Nebraska. In the state of Missouri, they voted to rescind paid sick leave and they voted to maintain minimum wage, fixed, \$15.

KELLY: That's time, Senator.

RAYBOULD: No increases. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Senator Andersen, you're recognized to speak.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, I will draw your attention to the handout that I presented. This came out in the hearing yesterday. It came from the Attorney General's Office while I introduced LB927 in Government, and Military, Veteran Affairs Committee. The-- LB927 is for the prohibition of foreign funds in ballot initiatives. And it's kind of ironic we're having this-- part of this conversation now on a ballot initiative. It really brings into question the will of the people versus the outside influence of foreign funds. And when you see the-- you look at the Wyss Foundation, you can see the traceabil-- the direct traceability through a number of different stopover or shell companies, nonprofits, that bring money down into ballot-- specific ballot initiatives within our state. There's a couple different quotes I would relay from testimony yesterday, from the AG's Office. It says, the state has discovered millions of dollars in contributions to Nebraska ballot question committees by organizations funded by the Hansjorg Wyss-- a multi-billionaire foreign national. Further down, it actually shows that in 2024, it was to the tune of nine point, nine point-- almost \$9.5 billion. So it's a significant effort to change the face, change the story, and change the outcome of ballot initiatives within our state. I would also quote from the testimony from the Nebraska Taxpayer for Freedom yesterday. It says, through transfer of funds, this foreign money goes to national nonprofits that then transfer money to local nonprofits, then to ballot communities. Sixteen Thirty Fund, the Fairness Project, and Hopeful [SIC] Fund gave a combined \$2.25 million to the paid sick leave campaign. Hmm, interesting. It says, several groups gave almost \$190,000 to anti-school voucher initiative campaigns. One group gave \$100,000 to medical marijuana effort. The Wyss Foundation and Berger Action Fund have dumped almost half a billion dollars into U.S. political system. So when we talk

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about outside influence, we talk the, the ballot initiatives, we talk about the will of people, let's make sure that we're really talking about the will of the people and not the outcome-- or the outcome of influence by foreign, foreign governments and foreign funds. And with that, I relinquish the remainder of my time, Mr. President, to--

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Andersen. 2 minutes, 40 seconds, Senator Raybould.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. I would just like to piggyback onto some of Senator Andersen's comments. Of the \$3.5 million raised by Raise the Wage Nebraska, \$2.8 million, more than 80%, came from 2 Washington D.C.-based entities. And oftentimes, I've heard people, well, how can it be the will of the people if it's being totally financed by outside folks and not Nebraskans? One other thing that I wanted to say really impacts hiring kids that are 14 and 15. I've tried to make the case that it's critical that we hire 14- and 15-year-olds because it's invaluable the skills that they learn and it sets them up for a better future. But I challenge my colleagues, how can kids-- and we know kids are helping more of their families in this tight economic situation-- pay for utilities, pay for food, pay for their own expenses. But I ask my colleagues, how can these kids that are 14 and 15 help their families if they don't get hired? How can they help their families if they don't get hired? What we're seeing and hearing from so many retailers, small and large-- they're not going to hire them. They just can't afford to hire them with all the other increases and minimum wage-- minimum wage and paid sick leave, on top of all the other things. They're making hard choices about how many people to hire and who to hire. So we all care about kids, and if you care about kids, you would actually be supportive of this youth wage. Because why? Because then they will get hired. This is an incentive to business to take-- be willing to take a chance on these young kids that really don't have a lot of skill sets that they bring, but we recognize these kids are helping their families. So I ask you-- we should be supporting this. We should be supporting more businesses hiring these kids at this wage so that they get the training, so that they can contribute, so that they can learn and be more productive and rise up in the wage scale. That's why it's that important, and that's why LB258 does that, and that's why it is so important that we continue to have a discussion on this matter. Next time on the mic, I will be talking about, does the minimum wage actually help people out of poverty-- poverty? That's one handout and one economic study I haven't had photocopied for you yet, but I will talk about it the next time on the mic. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

CONRAD: Thank you Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I rise in support of the motion to recommit and in opposition to the underlying bill. I find it particularly out of touch and striking that here, in the midst of an undeniable affordability crisis for working families, the first official act of this Nebraska Legislature will be to cut the minimum wage. Nebraska voters are smart, and they can't be bought. And the full text of every measure is presented to petition-signers and voters at the ballot box with a full and clear understanding of what their vote means. And Nebraska voters have voted not once, but twice, in recent years, in the face of inaction at the federal level and by this Legislature, to ensure modest but meaningful increases in the minimum wage, to ensure that work pays, to ensure we can have more people working in a productive manner, to ensure that we can save taxpayer dollars. Because when people earn fair wages, taxpayers don't have to subsidize subpoverty wages through work support programs like Medicaid and food stamps and childcare. When Nebraska voters lent their signatures in droves to put this on the ballot and voted with over 60%-- about 60% of the vote to pass this very language, it was not an advisory and opinion. It has co-equal lawmaking authority. The precious right of initiative is enshrined in our Constitution to enact and effectuate the will of the people as the first and precious right. The language that was presented to Nebraska voters tied future minimum wage increases to inflation so we weren't continually going back to the ballot box, and to ensure that we were responsive to actual economic conditions, right here in Nebraska. The Midwest CPI in Nebraska has recently risen about 2.7%. This restrains future increases to less than 2%. And what does that mean and what is driving it? Utility costs have increased across Nebraska. Right here in Lincoln, a 3% increase this year on electricity, built upon a 4% increase just in the last year. That's 7% in 2 years, for basic necessities like utility. Education costs have increased, with a massive jump in tuition at the University of Nebraska and other institutions, of over 5%, pushing a high-quality education further out of the reach of working families. Health insurance, health insurance costs in 2026 are rising significantly faster than general inflation, over 6 and 7%. In 2026, we're seeing the largest jumps in premiums in 15 years, and that will be exacerbated by a loss of the ACA credits. In housing, in Nebraska, we are seeing experienced price appreciation in rent and in home cost, far outpacing general inflation for basic necessities to put a roof over your head. Here in Nebraska, grocery

prices are at a record high, climbing beyond 3.1% of inflation. 68% of consumers note it's harder than ever to struggle with paying grocery costs to put food on the table in Nebraska. Childcare costs in Nebraska are experiencing significant above-average inflation, a 29% increase in just the last 4 years. And minimum wage workers of over 280,000 Nebraskans who are working, who are working will be impacted by these attempts to restrain modest but meaningful increases and force wages down with arbitrary cuts and caps. The vast majority of these workers are women, are workers of color, are young people, are living in rural communities. Yet, the business and job market in Nebraska is thriving. We have the lowest-- amongst the lowest unemployment in the country. We have more people on the work rolls than ever before, according to the Nebraska Department of Labor. Business is thriving, the economy is doing well, but the answer to addressing--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

CONRAD: --the affordability crisis is not to cut minimum wages.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Conrad.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Senator Arch would like to recognize physicians, residents, and medical students from the Nebraska Medical Association in both balconies. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues, and folks that are watching online. I have a lot of thoughts around the debate in, in front of us, and I appreciate the dialogue so far. However, I would like to yield my time to Senator Rountree to take a point of privilege, as he was kicked out of the queue and I think has some very important information to uplift to the body.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Spivey, Senator Rountree, you have 4 minutes, 30 seconds.

ROUNTREE: Thank you so much, Senator Spivey. And thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues, and all of those that are watching online. My inbox has been flooded a bit with those who are opposing this bill, but I haven't gotten any emails from those that tell us to support this bill, so I would try to follow with what my constituents are asking and oppose the underlying bill of LB258, but

agree to recommit it. But as I'm standing-- as I stated on yesterday, on Monday, Senator Spivey read our resolution this, this month, celebrating Black History Month. So today, I rise just to talk about Shirley Chisholm, some facts about her career, her trailblazing career. She may be best known for her 1972 run for president, but Shirley Chisholm broke barriers and influenced change throughout her life. She's widely known for her history-making turn in 1972, when she became the first African American from a major political party to run for President and the first Democratic woman of any race to do so. But her presidential bid was far from Chisholm's only accomplishment throughout her 80-year life. Born Shirley Anita Hill, a Guyanese American father and a Barbadian American mother in Brooklyn, New York on November 30, 1924, Shirley Chisholm excelled first in school and then in her political career. In 1968, she became the first black woman elected to Congress. And in 1972, she was the first black major party candidate to run for President. But beyond being a first, who was she? And how does her legacy impact us today? And I'll tell you how. She came from low-income housing down in a New York City neighborhood. So she had boots on the ground. She had lived experiences. Her parents struggled in economic crises. They faced discrimination. But she had incredible intellect, and that was recognized. Chisholm spent her childhood in Barbados with her grandmother, and then attended the prestigious Girls' High School in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. She went on to Brooklyn College, where she received awards for her skills as a debater, joined the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and the Harriet Tubman Society. While a student, she advocated for African American history curriculum, and for more women to be student government leaders, among other causes. But when she graduated from Brooklyn College in 1946 and earned her master's degree in elementary education from Columbia University's Teachers College 5 years later, her studies and work experiences in preschools later helped her to advocate for early childhood education and working mothers. You'll see those are the same things that we're still advocating for today. She campaigned for Brooklyn's first black judge, Lewis Flagg, Jr., and because of that involvement in her political career, she took part in other political groups, including the League of Women Voters, the Brooklyn Democratic Clubs, and the Unity Democratic Club. She also served in the New York, New York State Assembly. She drew upon those appearances in that political scene to successfully run for the New York State Assembly in 1964. She served in the role from 1965 to 1968, and her major achievements included granting domestic workers unemployment benefits. We're talking about benefits today, minimum wage-- and a program that gave underprivileged

students the opportunity to attend college while taking remedial education classes. New York's youth continue to benefit from these programs. I'll skip a little further down. Using the motto, Unbought and Unbossed, which she also would name in her 1970, 1970 autobiography, Chisholm ran for the seat in the New York's 12th Congressional District in 1968. But let me skip on down to the next part that I want to talk about. One of her great signature pieces of legislature in 1974 was authoring the 1974 Minimum Wage Law, passed through Congress. That bill expanded minimum wage standards to apply to domestic workers, as well as to more state and local government employees. That was absolutely another one of her significant achievements. And I was fortunate, in 1977, during a presidential classroom for young Americans in Washington, D.C., to spend 30 minutes with the great Shirley Chisholm in her office. She inspired me as a 17-year-old, and said, run and serve. It's been a long time, but I got here. So I just want to say--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

ROUNTREE: Thank you so much, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Roundtree. Senator Fredrickson, you're recognized to speak.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, Nebraskans. Thank you, Senator Rountree, for, for sharing that. That was, that was meaningful. So, you know, we, we, we spend a lot of time in here talking a lot about affordability, we talk about cost of living, we talk about high property taxes, and we're talking a lot about how hard it is for Nebraskans to afford rent, pay a mortgage, we, we hear sometimes, people even say people are leaving this state because they can't afford to live here anymore. And yet, kind of despite all that conversation, the first bill that we are poised to pass here in an hour or so is a bill that cuts the wages for our constituents, and I want us to pause and really sit with that contradiction. And yes, if you are making minimum wage and you are part of the youth wage, you currently make \$15 an hour. If this bill passes, your wage will go to \$13.50 an hour, assuming you're still on the minimum wage. To me, that is a wage cut. You know, we're at a time when Nebraskans are telling us they're stretched thin, their families are working harder than they ever have just to stay afloat. In our first course of action, this Legislature sends a message that the solution is not to help keep people up, to keep them in the workforce, but to ask some of them to just accept a little bit less. And a lot of

this debate has been focused on the youth wage, and I want to talk about that a bit more, because there's been a lot of conversation about how these workers should be made-- should make less, that that's somehow reasonable or that's somehow necessary. We've heard this argument that young people don't bring skills to the table, that they're learning on the job. This is an opportunity for them to learn. Well, let me ask you, under that logic, should a stay-at-home mom who's never held employment, who's getting her first job, now that she's an empty nester, should she make less? That's what we're saying. She doesn't have the skills, right? She's never worked before. She's learning on the job. Of course not. We as people, we understand instinctively that people bring so much more value than a resume line item to the job. Young Nebraskans aren't worth less because of their age. They show up on time, they do the work we ask them to do, and very often, they are using that income to support their families, to pay for school, to save for their futures. Cutting their wage does not teach them responsibility. It teaches them that their work is undervalued. In my district, I hear something very different from the business community than what's been suggested in this debate. Many employers in my district, they really value and appreciate a well-paid workforce. They care about their employees because they care about our community. They understand that when workers are paid fairly, they're more stable, they're reliable, they're more invested in their jobs. And to be frank, they are better customers. They can afford to spend more money locally. I also want to point out that the labor share of our nation's GDP is at its lowest since it started getting measured in 1947. It's gone down by 16%. So workers are taking 16% less of the share of the nation's GDP since 1947. Happens to be the same amount of percentage that the investor share has increased. So if we're serious about affordability, if we're serious about helping keep Nebraskans in their homes, helping them to keep up with the costs, the rising costs, then why is the first bill we're gonna pass this year one that reduces wages for people? We should be looking for ways to support work, to reward effort, and to ensure that when someone works a job in Nebraska, it pays them enough to live with dignity. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Fredrickson. Senator Hallstrom, you're recognized to speak.

HALLSTROM: Mr. President, members, I rise in opposition to the recommit to committee, and I will be supporting the motion to cloture that will be coming up shortly. On this issue, we've heard ad nauseam more so last year. I'm glad to see more pivoting towards affordability

and some more substantive things to talk about. But we heard ad nauseum last session that were defying the will of the voters, suggesting that supporters were saying that voters didn't know what they were voting on. The opponents are spinning a false narrative in that regard for political purposes. I, for one, do not question that the voters knew what they were voting on, but there's a distinction and a stark, a stark contrast between knowing what you're voting on and knowing what the consequences of what you are voting on entail. Lord knows the Legislature, over the years, has passed bills where they knew what they were voting on but later learn of unintended or unanticipated consequences. When that happens, we don't stick our head in the ground. We don't just say, gosh, we knew what we were voting on, so it's sacrosanct and we can't make any changes. Instead, we go forward, we remedy the problem, and address the unintended or unanticipated consequences by amending the statute. The minimum wage provisions approved by the voters came into being as a statutory ballot [INAUDIBLE]. The voters' action placed a statutory provision in the books. Nothing more, nothing less. As I did last year, I'd like to reiterate and kind of provide a historical perspective on the effect of the people adopting a statutory ballot initiative. We can take a trip down memory lane to sprinkle a dose of reality on the rhetoric surrounding the defying of the will of the voters. While respectful of the voters' decision in approving the minimum wage initiative, I have equal respect for the voters' decision or the so-called will of the people in amending Article III, Subsection 2 of the State Constitution in 2004. That change, approved by the people, entrusted and authorized the Legislature, pursuant to Initiative 418, to modify statutory enactments by the people, but only by a vote of at least two-thirds of the Legislature. The options provided in that constitutional provision are for the Legislature, with that two-thirds majority, to amend, modify, impair, or yes, even repeal a statutory ballot initiative. By way of example-- and, and Senator John Cavanaugh, with all due respect, you're splitting hairs when you suggest that to change the statutory ballot initiative is OK if we're providing a better voice for the will of the people. And I'd note that the Racetrack Gaming Act, passed under Initiative 430, prohibited wagers on in-state collegiate sporting events involving in-state teams and fantasy sports events. I would venture to guess that the voters that approved Initiative 430 didn't envision that they would not be able to, to place a, a gambling wager on their beloved Huskers, just because they were playing here in Lincoln. So we-- did we provide a better voice for the will of the people or did we defy the will of the voters in taking that action? You make the decision. In addition, statutory

initiatives are in a take it or leave it proposition. Senator Andersen talked about the influence of out-of-state foreign money. We also look at the situation where generally, a, a ballot initiative comes about in many instances because the Legislature has failed to act. Our bad. It results in the people taking action. In this case, they took a statutory initiative that was a take it or leave it. They didn't have the option for a higher or a lower minimum wage. They didn't even have an option for a higher youth training wage, as proposed under LB258. The last item I'd like to address is that when the two-thirds threshold was put into the Constitution in 2004, there's an Omaha World Herald article that we talked about last year that basically said it wasn't the result of anything the Legislature had done, but rather to encourage voters to place measures through statutory ballot initiative, rather than placing them into the constitution. The trade-off is that the Legislature can make changes. The other aspect of this issue is that a statutory initiative only takes 7% of the registered voters, or 87,500 votes approximately, while the constitutional amendment takes 10% or 125,000. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator-- thank you, Senator Hallstrom. Senator Clouse, you're recognized to speak.

CLOUSE: Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, I rise in opposition to the, the recommit, in support of the bill. And I'd like to point out that the bill simply states that they may pay a training wage. And we're acting like this is a requirement that if somebody, a, a youth that's, that's starting out in the, in the labor force, that we have to pay them. Well, it says they may. And you may have some kids that are starting right out and they're getting the same wage for doing the same work. Generally, that's not how it works. And there's several things going through mind as I listen to a lot of the dialogue and a lot of conversation, and one of them is we spent several hours in committee the other day, listening to a bill that Senator John Cavanaugh brought that talks about the makeup of the Medical Cannabis Commission. And essentially, it's walking back the will of the people because, as it was stated and we talked about a lot, the single source subject is how it gets on the ballot. And so they didn't have a lot of choices to get that medical cannabis pushed through without a single source. And so, they laid out their criteria and it was approved. This ballot initiative, very, very specific and single source, addressing minimum wage. OK. If they could have done multiple sources, they might have said and we'll do a training wage, and here's a minimum wage, and addressed all these things. So when it comes back to the body, just as we talked about in the General Affairs Committee the other day, we

have the opportunity to take what, what the will of the people is, and adjust it and make it fit the appropriate situations. And when we talk about, well, we're not thinking of the kids and, and, you know, they need this money, they need these, these jobs, I'm here to tell you that I've talked to everyday Nebraska small business owners in my community, and I've talked to a lot of them, and they want a training wage. And they cost, it costs kids jobs. And this is almost a, a quote, I am not going to pay a, a high school kid minimum wage to come in, and I have to tell them 3 times to empty out the trash. And that was almost a quote from one of the small business owners that I visited with. So I think there, there needs to be room for options here for everyday Nebraskan small businesses, and that's why it says they may pay that. And so, it's not a job creator. It doesn't-- you know, in many instances, it kills jobs. And so I think we just need to keep these thoughts in mind. Then the argument that, well, this is the first course of action, I would tell you that-- and Senator Hallstrom mentioned this, too, it's because we take so long debating and bringing the same things over and over and over again that we spent a lot of time last session talking about this and, and just basically killing time, so this is why it's the first one up this year. It's not something new. It's not something old. We've debated this for 12 hours already and that's why this is the first one for this year. So I'm hoping that we can move forward, and get this bill passed because I think it does give opportunities to the small businesses that really need this option and help them create these jobs instead of killing the jobs for those that don't do the same work for the same wage. And then the other comment was, you know, about our wealth. How did we get our wealth? I can tell you that my wealth started below minimum wage. It was a long time ago and people would not believe what minimum wage was back when I started working, but I wasn't making minimum wage. And you get to where you are by working hard. Earning the wages that you get paid and that's how life is. Thank you. And I'll yield the rest of my time to Senator Hallstrom if he'd like it.

KELLY: Senator Hallstrom, one minute, 12 seconds.

HALLSTROM: Thank you, Mr. President. I've probably said my peace, and I would waive any addition-- I would waive my additional time to Senator Raybould.

KELLY: Senator Raybould, 55 seconds.

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RAYBOULD: Thank you. I want to just talk about minimum wage and helping folks out of poverty. Research on the U.S. fails to find evidence that minimum wages help the poor.

KELLY: Senator Dungan, what-- state your point of order, please.

DUNGAN: Mr. President, I don't believe you can yield time that's already been yielded.

KELLY: You are correct, Senator. Next in the queue, Senator Dorn.

DORN: Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks for the debate this morning, listening to all this. I want to relate a little bit of a story about-- happened about 3 or 4 years ago in Appropriations. Don't remember the exact time and the exact discussion of why we were having it, but there was a business owner from north Omaha down in the airport region, had over 100 employees, testified in front of us that she was planning on or had planned on giving the em-- all the employees \$1 an hour wage. So this just shows you how it affects different companies different ways. She was going to give all the employees \$1 an hour wage increase. They came back to her and explained to her, many of them did, about the fact that this program or this program or this program, now, because of that wage increase, they would not be able to take full advantage of it. They were actually going to have less take-home pay. So we have many businesses across the state. Many of them are affected different. This minimum wage-- many of those people, those businesses, they know how it will affect them and what the outcome is for their employees. So-- but thank you for the discussion. It does not affect everybody the same. I will be for-- against the recommit and for LB258. And I yield the rest of my time to Senator Hansen.

KELLY: Who was the yield to? Senator Hansen, you have 3 minutes, 30 seconds.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, colleagues, at first glance, the idea of increasing the minimum wage seems compassionate. Raise the floor under wages and surely the working poor will be better off. Who could object to paying people a quote, living wage? Yet, as so often happens when government intervenes in voluntary transactions, the effects are precisely the opposite of those intended. The minimum wage is a classic case of a measure whose consequences harm the very people-- low-skilled workers, the young, minorities, and the disadvantaged-- it claims to help. Consider the most basic principle

of economics. People respond to incentives. When you make it illegal for an employer to hire somebody at less than a government-mandated rate, you do not magically increase the person's productivity or value to the employer. You simply make it unprofitable, or less profitable, to hire them at all. A high minimums-- a high minimum wage law is, in reality, a law that requires employers to discriminate against workers with low skills. If a young person, perhaps a teenager, just entering the labor force, or someone without much education or training cannot yet produce \$15 worth of output per hour but could produce \$10 worth, an employer might gladly hire him at \$10 or \$12 to give him on-the-job training-- the very best kind of training there is. But if the law says you must pay \$15 or nothing, the job simply vanishes. How is it that person-- that person better off unemployed at \$15 an hour, which means zero hours and zero income, than employed at \$12? The evidence is clear and has been for decades. When the federal minimum wage was raised sharp-- sharply in the 1950s, from \$0.75 to \$1 an hour, unemployment among black teenage boys shot up dramatically to level-- levels far, far higher than among white teenagers. Similar patterns appeared again and again with each subsequent increase. The group hurt most were always the same: teenagers, the unskilled, women re-entering the workforce, and disproportionately, minority workers. The minimum wage destroys entry-level jobs and blocks the ladder of opportunity that free markets otherwise would provide. Some defenders say, well, only a few jobs are lost. But even if the disemployment effect is small in percentage terms, it falls overwhelmingly on those least able to afford it: the very people at the bottom rung. And those who keep their jobs may see higher hourly pay, but fewer total hours, reduced benefits, or slower promotions. Meanwhile, the overall output of society shrinks because productive exchanges that would have occurred are forbidden. Worse still, this policy is supported by many with good will who generally want to reduce pov-- poverty, yet it is a monument to the power of superficial thinking. Look at who testifies when minimum wage increases are proposed. You seldom see the poor themselves clamoring for it. You see union leaders, whose higher-paid members face less competition from the unskilled, and you see politicians eager to appear compassionate. But the real victims are rarely in the room. If we truly wish to help low-income people, we should pursue policies that increase their skills, expand opportunity, and supplement their earnings without destroying jobs. The minimum wage does not raise the floor.

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

HANSEN: It prices them out. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hansen. Senator Guereca, you're recognized to speak.

GUERECA: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Citizens of Nebraska, take note. At a time when we are in the middle of a crippling affordability crisis, at a time where rent is a-- is high, where folks are struggling to pay for meat, for eggs, for milk, where childcare is running out of control and running amok, the very first act of this Legislature is not just lowering the minimum wage for young people-- another attack again against young people in the state-- but it's capping the increase in the minimum wage. Because for decades, the cost of living has outpaced wage growth in this country. So the citizens of this great state, in overwhelming fashion responding to their lived experiences, voted nearly 60% across the state and in 39 out of 49 legislative districts, to say, hey, maybe wage growth should be tied to cost of living. But this Legislature, in its glory and overwhelming knowledge said, no, we're going to cap that. Because who cares what your lived experience is? We know better than you. That is the message that's being sent. Instead of focusing on things-- and not only that, folks, we're gonna be raising taxes coming down the pipeline, like my colleague, Senator Dungan, just informed us. So in this legislative session, when we're facing a nearly half-billion-dollar deficit, this Legislature is going to cap wages, is going to raise taxes, and provide sweetheart tax deals to the wealthiest among us. That is the message we're sending to everyday working Nebraskans. 12 times in the last 20 years, the cost of living, the Midwest CPI, has outpaced the proposed cap in this legislation. But again, this body, in its wisdom, is about to cap wage growth in this state. Now, one of my colleagues brought up the fact that in our constitution, it does say that the Legislature is able to, you know, adjust the nuances of, of, of the referendum. But colleagues, being able to pay for groceries, being able to pay for rent, being able to pay for childcare is not a new nor is it a novel concept. It is something that has been discussed at kitchen tables across the state for over a century. Kitchen tables in Chadron, in Omaha, in McCook, in Blair, in Red Grout-- in Red Cloud, in Crofton, and in Ralston, everyday Nebraskans have struggled to balance their checkbook to make sure that they have enough money to bake-- make-- to take care of their sick kid, to be able to provide that good life for their family. But again, this Legislature knows better. And let's talk about the power of the referendum, so much so, the will of the people, it's overrated. Article III, Section 2 of the Nebraska Constitution: First power reserved. The first power reserved by the people is the

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initiative whereby laws may be enacted and constitutional amendments adopted by the people independent of the Legislature. This power may be invoke-- invoked by petition. The founders of this great state codified that-- the very first power reserved by the people. And to my colleagues that question whether or not legislation should be made in the parking lots of Hy-vees, I'll push back and say this: this great nation was founded in taverns in Boston, in Philadelphia, in Charleston, so yes. Absolutely. We are a nation for, by, and of the people. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Guereca. Senator Clements, you're recognized to speak.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to point out something that hasn't been mentioned much, is businesses are not required to just pay the minimum wage. They, they will pay more if the skills or ability are higher, and I think many businesses do. But I wanted also to talk about the youth wage of 14- and 15-year-olds and the limitations that-- by law. They're limited in, in several ways. They may only perform nonhazardous duties, may not clean or operate power equipment used in baking or meat processing, may not operate power-driven lifts, may only perform limited cooking and cleaning duties, may not perform any duties regarding baking, may only work 3 hours a weekday outside school hours, may only work limited hours on nonschool days, may not work in freezers or meat coolers. And so, the limitations that employers have and that the law requires are making them less valuable for the, the aged 14- and 15-year-olds, but this does allow them to be hired because of the discount in the hourly wage. And I think it's encouraging to me to see that we are going to make a stairstep, as they get older and have more skills and ability to be valuable in the business. With that, I'd like to yield the rest of my time to Senator Raybould.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Clements. Senator Raybould, 3 minutes, 15 seconds.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. I want to say, for the record, when I was 14 years old, I was allowed to work in the bakery, and I was a donut fryer. I cut dough with very sharp instruments. And then I also had to put whatever the chief baker told me to put in the oven. And the oven is huge. That doesn't happen today. OSHA has highly restricted any of those activities that Senator Clements spoke about. So that is, that is one of the, the big concerns and differences today, and I, I wanted to point that out. I also want to just have you

take a look at the very colorful minimum wage map. I know we talked about the states surrounding us, but if you look at some of the populations of those states that have a \$15 minimum wage like we do-- if you look at Kansas City population in the whole Kansas City, Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas, they have about 2.25 million. If you look at Chicago, which is just a little state over, that's also \$15, but it has a population of 2.72 million dollar-- population of 2.72 million. And Denver comes closer to the Omaha area. So I want to point that out, but the one thing that people need to hear is that the cost of living in our state of Nebraska is in the bottom 10, meaning we have the lowest cost of living in our state of Nebraska. But if you look at the map and look at those, those states on the East Coast and on the West Coast, we have those wages. And we all know that things on the East and West Coast are at a higher cost of living than in the state of Nebraska. I wanted to lift that up for your attention. So for those folks out there listening, it's a map that shows the states surrounding us. 3 of the states have a minimum wage of \$7.25, and ours is \$15, which puts us in the top 20 of all the states, including the majority of the states that are on the East and West Coast. The other thing I wanted to point out, that most states, all throughout the United States, already have a training wage and already have a youth wage. And they-- I just want to also point out that Senator Clements mentioned that for-- there are federal restrictions on youth workers, and they-- there are severe penalties for businesses that violate them. These are the states, among many, that have a youth wage. Minnesota, they pay \$8.83 per hour. Iowa is at \$4.25. States like Michigan and Washington pay 85% of their minimum wage. So, when we're looking at ours, we're asking that we pay 75% of Nebraska minimum wage. And that youth wage will increase every 5 years, and that's something to keep in mind, as well as our minimum wage will increase. It'll increase by that 1.75%, which is fixed and predictable for businesses. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator Storm, you're recognized to speak.

STORM: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, colleagues. I support LB258. You notice that everyone opposing this bill is basically saying the same thing? Some are more animated than others, some speak better than others, all to pull on your heartstrings. It almost seems like someone's behind the glass texting them, telling them what to do. I've made a pledge not to increase taxes in this body. There's 4 of us that did. Minimum wage increase is essentially a tax on small businesses-- businesses in general, but specifically small businesses. Small

businesses are the backbone of our economy. And my daughter, 16 years old, she works in a grocery store. She works for minimum wage, gets paid a lot, I think. She is learning how to work. It's a starting, starting job for her, starting wage, and that's what minimum wage is. It's, it's a starting job, for mainly younger people. If you're a really good employee, especially if you're older, you're going to get paid a lot more. I'm a small business owner. We're all looking for good employees. It's hard to find-- truly is, today. You have to look hard for good, reliable employees. And I would tell the young pages sitting up here, if you're a good, reliable employee, you'll be able to do whatever you want to do and make a lot of money. It's hard to find. So when we talk about minimum wage, this is for young people, such as my daughter or younger, who are learning how to work. It's not a living wage. No one sits there and says, I'm going to make a career in making minimum wage. Very few people do that. If you're a good employee, you will be advanced on. I also want to talk about the ballot initiatives here. Yesterday, there were 2, 2 bills and a Veteran Affairs Committee. I had one of them. Senator Andersen had the other one of him. His was to keep foreign money out of ballot initiatives. And he spoke about this a little bit. There's a Swiss billionaire who is funneling millions of dollars into states, in Nebraska, as well, to try to influence our state, influence our politics. In Initiative 433, which is what we were talking about this bill relates to, there was \$3.7 million spent in Nebraska to change our minimum wage laws. \$2.5 million came from the Sixteen Thirty Fund. OK? Where does the Sixteen Thirty Fund get their money from? A Swiss billionaire. So that is who is influencing our politics in this Nebra-- in Nebraska. And just as we talk about having election security, we should have ballot initiative security in our state, and, and that was what my bill was about yesterday. We focused on-- was trying to have some type of security in this state. Right now, in Nebraska, you only have to-- the only requirement is to be 18 years old to collect signatures. That's it. You can bus people in from out-of-state, you can pay them, they can live in a hotel all month, stand outside your, your grocery store, or stand outside the mall, and collect signatures. They get paid by the signature they get. That, that-- so that's what-- how the ballot initiative process works. You get a rich, Swiss billionaire to give \$2.5 million to somebody in Nebraska to form a committee, they go hire people from Illinois, Chicago, New York, California, they bus them to Nebraska, and they collect signatures. So is that truly how we want our politics in our state to be ran? Because that's how we're going with the init-- with the ballot initiative process. So this is a good bill. We need this. I

am totally for small businesses. This is a huge tax as we begin to jack up our minimum wage higher than anybody else in the Midwest. It's a huge drag on small businesses. And with that, I'm going to yield the rest of my time to Senator Raybould.

KELLY: Senator Raybould, one minute, 5 seconds.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. You know, I just want to continue to quote on how important it is to hire young people. You know, employers are unable to afford to hire more unskilled and inexperienced workers when the minimum wage increases. Ironically, one of the stated goals of the Fair Labor Standards Act, FLSA, is to protect the educational opportunities of minors. However, as labor becomes more expensive for small businesses, managers can afford to hire fewer workers, and that leaves unskilled teens and minorities out of luck. You don't need to believe me. You need to ask the people and business owners and small business owners in your community if they're not seeing that. Teen unemployment is 3 times the national unemployment rate. The percentage of teens classified as unemployed, those are the ones that are actively seeking a job but just can't get one. Lastly, teens are disproportionately affected in a negative manner by minimum wage increases. Mandated wage increases--

KELLY: That's time, Senator.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator Hallstrom would like to recognize some guests in both balconies. They are from the Nebraska Farm Bureau from all over the state, here for a legislative conference. Please stand and be recognized by your Nebraska Legislature. Returning to the queue, Senator Hughes, you are recognized to speak.

HUGHES: Thank you, Mr. President. I've heard the word frustrated multiple times today. People are frustrated by this bill. You know, we're, we're changing the will of the voters. Well, you know what? I'm frustrated by his body. I cannot believe that this bill is being filibustered and we are spending, spending this much time on it. The people voted on the ballot in November of 2022 for minimum wage to go to \$15 an hour in 2026-- which has happened-- and then to grow. That's exactly what we are passing. Minimum wage is \$15 now, and if this bill goes on, it'll grow by 1.75%. When you look at the average of the 20 years before 2020, because with COVID, that was an anomaly, on

average, it would be 1.5% growth. So we are actually, with this bill, paying the workers more every year per hour than they would have get, assuming that average would carry on. This bill is a win-win. It's a win for workers. They're getting more with that average increase every year than they would have gotten. And the other win is the consistency. It's the consistency that every year it goes up exactly 1.75%. And do you know where that's helpful? It's helpful for the worker. They know exactly what increase they'll get. They might get more, because this is just a floor. They might get more, but at least they'll get the 1.75%. And it's a win for businesses. They need consistency also. Businesses plan 5 years out, 10 years out, 15 years out, 20 years out. And this gives them the consistency to know how much that labor cost is going to be. So I'm frustrated by this debate. I think it's-- it doesn't make sense to me. Logically, what we're doing makes sense. It's the best thing to do for workers. It's the best thing to do for business. And the best we can do for this state is to grow our-- we want to grow our economy. The best way to do that is to grow our businesses and make a healthy environment for our businesses who are going to hire more people, and that's what this does. That consistency, it's good for workers and it's for business owners. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hughes, Senator Jacobson, you're recognized to speak.

JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. President. I, I guess I would just echo what Senator Hughes said and would also suggest that many of you who may have read some of the press releases over the last few months about the cheapest place in America to live and they highlighted different communities in Nebraska as being the cheapest place to live. And I can tell you as I go across my district in the various villages in District 42, their-- the cost of living is very low. Because primarily the housing costs are much lower and they're able to provide a cheaper place to live. But in order for people to live there, they need a job. And there are limited opportunities to create jobs. Now, I'm, I'm, I'm always impressed by those who have done that. I think, in Maxwell, an individual who has a salvage yard and also sells equipment, and he employs people in the salvage yard to take parts off of various pieces of equipment. At what point does the minimum wage get to the point where he can no longer afford to hire them, so people in those villages can no longer work there because there are no jobs? That's the challenge in the remote, small communities is the lack of job opportunities. And now we're doing another step to take it away from them. How many voters who voted for the ballot initiative gave any

thought to that at all? I would venture to say none. Because if they had, they would have recognized that there is a limit. I mean, why did we stop at \$15? Why not make it \$25 or \$50 an hour? That would be good, wouldn't it? Nobody could afford to pay it. They'd go out of business, and there would be no jobs available, but who cares? I guess-- I want \$50 an hour. The point is that the minimum wage should not be the wage we pay. It should be below what we pay, and that's what it had been before. The minimum wage when it was \$7.25, almost everyone was paying more than the minimum wage. Why? Because that was the minimum wage, not the maximum wage. It was the minimum wage. What happened along the way? Just because some billionaire decided to fund a ballot initiative and put it on the ballot and people read the one-liner and said, gosh, why would I be against this? They take 15 seconds to read it, well sure, I'm going to vote for this. Someone else pointed out in the body earlier. What happens when bills come to the Legislature just like this one? We had a hearing, and everyone could come in and speak at the hearing as to how they felt about the bill. And then when it got voted out of committee to the floor, we've had 3 rounds of debate on the floor. We don't do that on a ballot initiative. We don't even go close to that. That's why there is that caveat that says that the Legislature can modify and even repeal a ballot initiative, because we've gone the extra steps to get input from both sides and hear all of the dialogue and all the people that this impacts. Yesterday in Revenue Committee, we were talking about sales taxes, and a bill that would increase certain sales taxes. We had the tattoo artists, we had the hair designers, we had others that came in that said, this will put me out of business. After I've had to pay paid sick leave, after I've been required to [MALFUNCTION] off, and now raise the minimum wage, I can't afford it. I can't afford it. You're putting me out of business. This is a job protection bill. This isn't say that we have to pay the minimum wage. We never did before. This allows employers to hire people at a lower wage so that they can actually have a job. That's what this is. I appreciate Senator Raybould for bringing it. She's seen it firsthand. They-- she employs hundreds of, of, of underage individuals to work in the stores. They have a job that they may not have, otherwise. So thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Senator Jacobson, Senator Raybould, you're recognized to speak.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. I started this discussion on what really helps up-- uplift people from poverty. And again, I'm quoting another economic study. I'm happy to make these copies available upon request. It says, research on the U.S. fails to find evidence that

minimum wages help the poor. They may actually increase the number of poor and low-income families. This echoes what Senator Hansen said in his remark. The economist said that more than half of poor households have no workers, and also that some workers are poor because of low hours, not low wages. Increasing minimum wages to \$15 does not alleviate any of this type of poverty. In fact, new and traditional literature on the effects of minimum wage raises suggest that despite minimum wage earners receiving higher wages due to these policies, the increased cost to businesses-- business owners to employ such workers will "redult"-- result in reduced employment, as business owners experiencing limited profit margins, profit margins and cash flow are faced with steep annual increases in employment costs, which do not necessarily match the rate of revenue increases, employers will be forced to cut costs by eliminating jobs altogether. This is particularly true when we consider regions where low housing and labor costs support the social and labor market integration of both immigrants and low-skilled, native-born workers, more than doubling the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$15, risk radically altering the entry-level opportunities on which these individuals rely. Evidence from areas that have previously enacted significant minimum wage raises also suggests a negative impact on employment. After Seattle's minimum wage was raised to \$13 in 2016, researchers at the University of Washington found that hours worked by "loge"-- low-wage employees were actually reduced and total payroll in such jobs declined, despite the hourly wage increase, due to the decrease in hours worked. San Francisco, another city that had a \$15 minimum wage, as the minimum wage increased over time, each dollar increase correlated with a 14% increase in the probability that a median-rated restaurant would close, according to a study from Harvard Business School. The authors noted that there was no significant impact of minimum wage increases on five-star restaurants, suggesting that businesses already struggling to bring in customers may be most overwhelmed by minimum wage increases and be forced to lay off employees-- ultimately close, in order to cut losses. So I think we have presented a lot of economic studies, and I'm happy to give them to you so you can see the sources. The one thing I wanted to say about minimum wage workers and the young at \$14 and \$15, I know my colleagues have postured that, you know, now, those 14- and 15-year-olds are getting \$15 an hour, but there's nothing that obligates or requires their current employer to lower them down to that \$13.50, \$13.50 an hour. And in-- a smart employer, if they have a hardworking 14-year-old, you and all Nebraskans watching, want to keep that young person employed, because he's an awesome-- he or she is an awesome worker. So that posturing by my

colleagues is incorrect. The other thing, when it comes to a training wage, many companies have a workforce shortage. That's no surprise. That's no secret. And so, they're eager to get a person trained and back in operations or productions or whatever that work demands. But in order to do that, training time has been collapsed significantly, because they need that worker doing that job, with or without a 90-day training. And that's a may. That's also a may pay them that \$13.50 an hour or whatever-- 90% of Nebraska's minimum wage is at that time, for 90 days, but it doesn't obligate. It does not require that employer to do it, but he has that option. Just as that employer has an option, coming in July, to pay, pay any new hires that are 14- and 15-year-olds, \$13.50, or guess what? That employer can offer \$15 as a minimum wage.

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr.--

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould, Senator DeKay, you're recognized to speak.

DeKAY: Thank you, Mr. President. I was sitting here, taking notes, writing my outline of what I was going to talk about this morning. I'm not going to take up the body's time reiterating what Senator Clements, what Senator Hughes, and what Senator Jacobs [SIC] have talked about. I agree with them 100% on the viability of this bill. There are things that I will say, what Senator Jacobson spoke to. I will change a little bit. Number one, there are community-owned grocery stores in my district. There are community-run movie theaters that the passing or failing of this bill will affect one way or the other, so I'm keeping in mind the communities of my district and what I would change from Senator Jacobson. I'm talking about communities in my district: Stuart, Atkinson, Hartington-- they are all reaching out the same way and they will be adversely affected if minimum wage stands as it is right now. So I do agree with LB24-- LB258 of Senator Raybould, and I will yield the rest of my time to Senator Raybould.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator. Senator Raybould, 3 minutes, 45 seconds.

RAYBOULD: Thank you, Mr. President. You know, I wanted to share with you what I-- an email that I got from a person who is a senior at Kimball High School, in Nebraska, and this is their thoughts. And I, I love the fact-- because I always think Nebraskans are so commonsense and so practical. This is what the student said. I'm emailing you

about your bill for a civics project. I chose this bill because I am very passionate with my opinion on anything that involves minimum wage. I think having a minimum wage at \$15 is absurd. This is because if the minimum wage raises that high, so will everything else. This can include any store or company that has employees to pay. I also think, in a way, a minimum wage that high will bring down the value of some other jobs, causing people to work the jobs that require less work. This leaves the jobs that require more effort in the dust. I would love to hear back from you. Thank you for your time. So this is how I responded. I said, hi. I support the voter-approved minimum wage increases that gradually raise the wage to \$15 per hour by 2026. However, I have concerns about the impact on small businesses and rural communities when the annual increases based on the CPI begin on January 1, 2027. First and foremost, the annual increases combined with the CPI increase profoundly impact our daycare and early childhood facilities that have no choice but to pass these increases on to hardworking families. Many families already struggle to make ends meet, whether paying for childcare. Additionally, there are significant impacts on many other industries, especially in our rural communities, such as grocers, cafes, restaurants, including fast food, detasseling companies, personal service providers, and all retailers. Losing a grocery store that is the only source of affordable and nutritious food would constitute, would--I'm sorry-- would contribute to the existing economic and geographical food desert issue in rural Nebraska. The average CPI for the last 50 years was 3.8 "perseven"-- 3.8%. The previous year was 3,63, and last year it was 6,5. I propose a foreseeable, reliable, fixed annual growth rate. This will provide consistent worker increase and predictability figure for small business to budget. Without this adjustment and based on the average CPI over the last 15 years of 3.8%, in 10 years, the minimum wage in Nebraska will grow to nearly \$20 per hour, and in 20 years, close to 29 per-- \$29 per hour. I have heard from many constituents, nonconstituents, friends, and trusted colleagues who disagree with my approach in this bill. I have listened to your concerns and am willing to shoulder your criticism. One of the best parts of democracy is the abil-- ability for all voices to be represented, for issues to be discussed, and even when we disagree, be willing to listen to one another and continue working for the good of all. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Raybould. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, again, I rise in support of the motion to recommit and opposed to LB258. I'm probably going to be the last voice you will hear who is opposed to this measure. So I've heard a lot of interesting conversation today, and there-- a lot of the conversation has been just against the idea of a minimum wage, in general. And that was decided by the voters. Nebraska has had a minimum wage for 60 years. The United States has had a minimum wage for 87 years. So the idea that a minimum wage is both a good and a matter of public policy, that is settled. An argument against this type of growth in the minimum wage is something that could have been expressed by the opponents at the ballot box when there was an ongoing campaign in 2022, as opposed to then coming after the fact and now arguing against it. So this was passed by the voters by about 58%, much higher in many of our districts, including mine, and so, so to characterize it as a public poll or whatever someone had said-- this is not a poll. This is a vote of the people just as much as the vote of the people that put you here. Those same people voted, and as Senator McKinney said one time, they wanted this more than they wanted you. That was one of the most compelling things I've heard anybody say. And that is true. The voters voted 58% into this-- very few people here who got that high of a threshold. So, this is, again, the first Final Reading act of this Legislature. 2026 Nebraska Legislature, if you adopt this, we'll vote for a bill that lowers the wage for Nebraskans, and lowers it to such a degree-- currently, those Nebraskans who are going to see their wage lowered are getting paid \$15 an hour. If this bill passes, it goes to \$13.50. With the stepped-up approach in this bill, that will not return to \$15.00 an hour until the year 2065, 2065 to get back to where they are today. That's my grandkids-- be getting still less than the-- than kids working today will get. That is shocking, colleagues. So there's this conversation about certainty of the minimum wage at 1.75. I did the math, based off of what the Nebraska Examiner had published. The last 25-year average for the CPI Midwest is 2.38%. So at 2.38%, the wage would go up 35 cents. At 1.75%, it goes up 26 cents. It's a small difference, of course, but it is-- over time, adds up. And again, it is a difference that the voters voted for. So I rely on the-- have faith in the will of the voters and agree with them. So I'm going to run out of time, and I-- there's a few things I wanted to point to. I-- you know, I'm-- was raised Catholic, big, big fan of our new Pope, Pope Leo XIV, And when he became Pope, I went back and read-- tried to understand a little of the context of why he named himself Leo. The last Pope, Leo XIII, wrote Rerum Novarum, which was the Catholic Church's attempt to understand modern economics. And the Catholic Church was dealing with rising socialism,

laissez-faire capitalism, and all those sorts of things. And so, this is what Pope Leo XIII said, in 1891, about wage. That to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain and to gather one's profits out of the need of another is condemned by all laws, human and divine. And then ellipses, so we can continue on. Lastly, that a rich-- rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workman's earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealings. And with greater reason, because the laboring man is unprotected and because of slender means, should be a proportioned scathing account sacred. So what the Pope, who our current Pope has taken his name after, is saying that we should not, as a matter of both human law and divine law, be putting pressures on the working people and taking away their hard-earned wages. I agree with the voters. I agree with that Pope. I would encourage your red vote on the, on the-- on this bill. I would encourage your green vote on the motion to recommit. I would encourage your red vote on the cloture. As long as I have a few seconds left, I would point out, again, I have the ballot language here-- does specifically include Section 2, about the stepped-up increase, based on the--

KELLY: That's your time.

J. CAVANAUGH: --CPI Midwest. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh, Senator Hughes and Lippincott would like to recognize some guests in the south balcony. They are K through eighth grade Hamilton and York County homeschoolers. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Senator Strommen, you're recognized to speak.

STROMMEN: Thank you, Mr. President. So what we've heard here, people are trying to get you to believe that we are cutting wages or we're reducing paychecks, when in reality, we're attempting to keep people employed. As wages are be-- [MALFUNCTION]-- increased, and this is an artificial increase in wages, everything else follows. And there's 2 real options there. Either prices are going to go up for everyone or unemployment is going to go down. In effect, this is a price increase-- same as a tax increase-- across the board, for every Nebraskan. Reality, we do care. If we didn't care about this, we would leave this alone, and people, ultimately, would lose their jobs, which is not what we want to have happen. We want to ensure that people are employed. We want to ensure that businesses are solvent, and we want to ensure that the economy is strong in Nebraska. I would like to yield the rest of my time to Senator Storer.

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KELLY: Thank you, Senator Strommen. You ready? Mr. Clerk, you have a motion on your desk.

CLERK: I do, Mr. President. Senator Raybould would move to invoke cloture pursuant to Rule 7, Section 10. Senator Raybould, for what purpose do you rise?

RAYBOULD: For cloture and a roll call vote.

KELLY: Members, please return to your seats for a-- members, please find your seat for Final Reading. Members, the first vote is the motion to invoke cloture. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. And there is a request for a roll call vote.

CLERK: Senator Andersen voting yes. Senator Arch voting yes. Senator Armandariz voting yes. Senator Ballard voting yes. Senator Bosn voting yes. Senator Bostar voting no. Senator Brandt voting yes. Senator John Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Clements voting yes. Senator Clouse voting yes. Senator Conrad voting no. Senator DeBoer voting no. Senator DeKay voting yes. Senator Dorn voting yes. Senator Dover voting yes. Senator Dungan voting no. Senator Fredrickson voting no. Senator Guereca voting no. Senator Hallstrom voting yes. Senator Hansen voting yes. Senator Hardin voting yes. Senator Holdcroft voting yes. Senator Hughes voting yes. Senator Hunt voting no. Senator Ibach voting yes. Senator Jacobson voting yes. Senator Juarez voting no. Senator Kauth voting yes. Senator Lippincott voting yes. Senator Lonowski voting yes. Senator McKinney voting no. Senator Fred Meyer voting yes. Senator Glen Meyer voting yes. Senator Moser voting yes. Senator Murman voting yes. Senator Prokop voting no. Senator Quick voting no. Senator Raybould voting yes. Senator Riepe voting yes. Senator Rountree voting no. Senator Sanders voting yes. Senator Sorrentino voting yes. Senator Spivey voting no. Senator Storer voting yes. Senator Storm voting yes. Senator Strommen voting yes. Senator von Gillern voting yes. Senator Wordekemper voting no. The vote is 33 ayes, 16 nays to invoke cloture, Mr. President.

KELLY: Cloture is invoked. Members, the next vote is on the motion to recommit. All those in favor vote aye; all those oppo-- there's been a request for roll call vote. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator Andersen voting no. Senator Arch voting no. Senator Armendariz, voting no. Senator Ballard voting no. Senator Bosn voting no. Senator Bostar voting yes. Senator Brandt voting no. Senator John Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator

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Clements voting no. Senator Clouse voting no, Senator Conrad voting yes. Senator DeBoer voting yes. Senator DeKay voting no. Senator Dorn voting no. Senator Dover voting no. Senator Dungan voting yes. Senator Fredrickson voting yes. Senator Guereca voting yes. Senator Hallstrom voting no. Senator Hansen voting no. Senator Hardin voting no. Senator Holdcroft voting no. Senator Hughes voting no. Senator Hunt voting yes. Senator Ibach voting no. Senator Jacobson voting no. Senator Juarez voting yes. Senator Kauth voting no. Senator Lippincott voting no. Senator Lonowski voting no. Senator McKinney voting yes. Senator Fred Meyer voting no. Senator Glen Meyer voting no. Senator Moser voting no. Senator Murman voting no. Senator Prokop voting yes. Senator Quick voting yes. Senator Raybould voting no. Senator Riepe voting no. Senator Rountree voting yes. Senator Sanders voting no. Senator Sorrentino voting no. Senator Spivey voting yes. Senator Storer voting no. Senator Storm voting no. Senator Strommen voting no. Senator von Gillern voting on. Senator Wordekemper voting yes. The vote is 16 ayes, 33 nays, to recommit the bill, Mr. President.

KELLY: The motion to recommit is not adopted. Mr. Clerk, please read the bill.

CLERK: [Read LB258 on Final Reading]

KELLY: Senator, Senator Raybould, please-- I cannot take a point of order on Final Reading on cloture. This will take 30 votes to pass. Excuse me. This will take 33 votes to pass, Senator. All provisions of law relative to procedure having been complied with, the question is, shall LB258 pass? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Voting aye: Senators Andersen, Arch, Armendariz, Ballard, Bosn, Brandt, Clements, Clouse, DeKay, Dorn, Dover, Hallstrom, Hansen, Hardin, Holdcroft, Hughes, Ibach, Jacobson, Kauth, Lippincott, Lonowski, Fred Meyer, Glen Meyer, Moser, Murman, Raybould, Riepe, Sanders, Sorrentino, Storer, Storm, Strommen, von Gillern. Voting no: Senators Bostar, Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Conrad, DeBoer, Dungan, Fredrickson, Guereca, Hunt, Juarez, McKinney, Prokop, Quick, Rountree, Spivey, Wordekemper. Vote is 33 ayes, 16 nays on the passage of the bill, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB258 passes. The next bill on Final Reading is LB60. Mr. Clerk, please-- Mr. Clerk, please read the bill.

CLERK: [Read LB60 on Final Reading]

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KELLY: All provisions of law relative to procedure having been complied with, the question is, shall LB60 pass? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Voting aye: Senators Andersen, Ballard, Bosn, Bostar, Brandt, Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Clouse, Conrad, DeBoer, DeKay, Dorn, Dover, Dungan, Fredrickson, Guereca, Hallstrom, Hansen, Holdcroft, Hughes, Hunt, Ibach, Jacobson, Juarez, Kauth, McKinney, Meyer, Meyer, Moser, Prokop, Quick, Raybould, Riepe, Rountree, Sanders, Sorrentino, Spivey, Storm, Strommen, von Gillern, Wordekemper. Voting no: Senators Arch, Armendariz, Clements, Hardin, Lippincott, Lonowski, Murman and Storer. Vote is 41 ayes, 8 nays, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB60 passes. The next bill is LB207. Please read the bill.

CLERK: [Read LB207 on Final Reading]

KELLY: All provisions of law relative to procedure having been complied with, the question is, shall LB207 pass? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Voting aye: Senators Andersen, Arch, Armendariz, Ballard, Bosn, Bostar, Brandt, Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Clements, Clouse, Conrad, DeBoer, DeKay, Dorn, Dover, Dungan, Fredrickson, Guereca, Hallstrom, Hansen, Hardin, Holdcroft, Hughes, Hunt, Ibach, Jacobson, Juarez, Kauth, Lippincott, Lonowski, McKinney, Meyer, Meyer, Moser, Murman, Prokop, Quick, Raybould, Riepe, Rountree, Sanders, Sorrentino, Spivey, Storer, Storm, Strommen, von Gillern, Wordekemper. Voting no: none. The vote is 49 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB207 passes. The next bill is LB212. Members, the first vote is to dispense with the at-large reading. All of those in favor, vote aye; all of those opposed, vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 45 ayes, 1 nay to dispense with the at-large reading.

KELLY: The at-large reading is dispensed with. Mr. Clerk, please read the title.

CLERK: [Read title of LB212]

KELLY: All provisions of law relative to procedure having been complied with, the question is, shall LB212 pass? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

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CLERK: Voting aye: Senators Andersen, Arch, Armendariz, Ballard, Bosn, Bostar, Brandt, Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Clements, Clouse, Conrad, DeBoer, DeKay, Dorn, Dover, Dungan, Fredrickson, Guereca, Hallstrom, Hansen, Hardin, Holdcroft, Hughes, Hunt, Ibach, Jacobson, Juarez, Kauth, Lippencott, Lonowski, McKinney, Meyer, Meyer, Moser, Murman, Prokop, Quick, Raybould, Riepe, Rountree, Sanders, Sorrentino, Spivey, Storer, Storm, Strommen, von Gillern, Wordekemper. Vote is 49 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on advancement of the bill.

KELLY: LB212 passes. The next bill is LB384. The first vote is to dispense with the at-large reading. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 46 ayes, 1 nay to dispense with the at-large reading, Mr. President.

KELLY: The at-large reading is dispensed with. Mr. Clerk, please read the title.

CLERK: [Read title of LB384]

KELLY: All provisions of law relative to procedure having been complied with, the question is, shall LB384 pass? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Voting aye: Senators Andersen, Arch, Armendariz, Ballard, Bosn, Bostar, Brandt, Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Clements, Clouse, Conrad, DeBoer, DeKay, Dorn, Dover, Dungan, Fredrickson, Guereca, Hallstrom, Hansen, Hardin, Holdcroft, Hughes, Hunt, Ibach, Jacobson, Juarez, Kauth, Lippincott, Lonowski, McKinney, Meyer, Meyer, Moser, Murman, Prokop, Quick, Raybould, Riepe, Rountree, Sanders, Sorrentino, Spivey, Storer, Storm, Strommen, von Gillern, Wordekemper. Vote-- voting no: None. Vote is 49 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB384 passes. The next bill is LB518. Mr. Clerk, please read the bill.

CLERK: [Read LB518 on Final Reading]

KELLY: All provisions of law relative to procedure having been complied with, the question is, shall LB518 pass? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Voting aye: Senators Andersen, Arch, Armendariz, Ballard, Bosn, Bostar, Brandt, Cavanaugh, Cavanaugh, Clements, Clouse, Conrad,

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DeBoer, DeKay, Dorn, Dover, Dungan, Fredrickson, Guereca, Hallstrom, Hansen, Hardin, Holdcroft, Hughes, Hunt, Ibach, Jacobson, Juarez, Kauth, Lippincott, Lonowski, McKinney, Meyer, Moser, Murman, Prokop, Quick, Raybould, Riepe, Rountree, Sanders, Sorrentino, Spivey, Storer, Storm, Strommen, von Gillern, Wordekemper. Voting no: none. The vote is 49 ayes, 0 nays on passage of the bill, Mr. President.

KELLY: LB518 passes. Mr. Clerk, for items.

CLERK: Thank you, Mr. President. Items for the record. Amendments to be printed from Senator Storer to LB123. Additionally, Senator Storer, amendment to be printed to LB663; Senator John Cavanaugh to LB397. Communication from Senator Quick, designating LB720 as his personal priority bill for the session; and a communication from Senator Holdcroft, as the General Affairs commit-- chair, designating LB1001 as the committee priority bill for the session. Also, a notice from the Revenue Committee. They will hold an executive session now, in room 2102. Revenue Committee, exec session, now, in room 2102. That's all I have at this time.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. While the Legislature is in session and capable of transacting business, I propose to sign and do hereby sign LB258, LB60, LB207, LB212, LB384, and LB518. Mr. Clerk, please proceed with the next item on the agenda.

CLERK: Mr. President, Select File, LB716. There are no E&R amendments. Senator Kauth, I have FA350-- FA345.

KELLY: Senator Kauth, you're recognized to open on the motion.

KAUTH: Thank you, Mr. President. Sorry, I was going to Revenue. I'd like to withdraw this bill-- amendment-- floor amendment.

KELLY: So ordered.

CLERK: In that case, Senator, I have nothing further on the bill.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that LB716 be advanced to E&R for engrossing.

KELLY: Members, you've heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, nay. LB716 is advanced for engrossing. Mr. Clerk.

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CLERK: Mr. President, Select File, LB668. First of all, there are E&R amendments, Senator.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that the E&R amendments to LB668 be adopted.

KELLY: Members, you've heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, nay. The E&R amendments are adopted.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Storer would move to amend with AM1808.

KELLY: Senator Storer, you're recognized to open.

STORER: Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning. This is just a simple amendment to, to the base bill. It just clarifies the intent that this list of prevention services for candidates of foster care is not exhaustive or exclusive. We want to make sure that all appropriate services and interventions pertain to meeting family needs under the department's prevention plan can be considered and added by adding "including but not limited to," is what the amendment adds to the language. Again, this is just sort of in, in essence, kind of a cleanup and making sure that the intent of the bill is properly reflected in the language. I would ask for your green vote on AM1808.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Storer. Seeing no one else in the queue, you're recognized to close, and waive closing. Senators, the question is the adoption of AM1808. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 32 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

KELLY: AM1808 is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator, I have nothing further on the bill.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that LB668 be advanced to E&R for engrossing.

KELLY: Members, you heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, nay. LB668 is advanced for E&R Engrossing. Mr. Clerk.

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CLERK: Mr. President, Select File, LB6-- LB365. Senator, first of all, there are E&R amendments.

KELLY: Senator, Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that the E&R amendments to LB365 be adopted.

KELLY: Members, you've heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, say nay. The amendments are adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator, I have nothing further on the bill.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that the E&R amendments to LB365 be adopted.

KELLY: Members, you heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, nay. LB365 is advanced for E&R Engrossing. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Select File, LB203. First of all, Senator, their E&R amendments.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that the E&R amendments to LB203 be adopted.

KELLY: Senators, you've heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, say nay. They are adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator, I have nothing further on the bill.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that LB203 be advanced to E&R for engrossing.

KELLY: Members, you heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, say nay. LB203 is advanced for E&R Engrossing. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Select File, LB437. First of all, Senator, there are E&R amendments.

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KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that the E&R amendments to LB437 be adopted.

KELLY: Members, you heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, say nay. The amendments are adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator, I have nothing further on the bill.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that LB437 be advanced to E&R for engrossing.

KELLY: Members, you heard the motion. All those in favor, vote aye; all tho-- say aye. Those opposed, say nay. LB437 is advanced for E&R Engrossing. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Select File, LB110. First of all, Senator, there are E&R amendments.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that the E&R amendments to LB110 be adopted.

KELLY: Members, you heard the motion. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, say nay. The E&R amendments are adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Hughes would move to amend with FA949.

KELLY: Senator Hughes, you're recognized to open on the amendment.

HUGHES: Thank you, Mr. President. This is just a cleanup amendment that was requested by DHHS, and it provides just clarification of some of the definitions contained in this bill. That's what it does. So I ask for your green vote on that.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hughes. Seeing no one else in the queue, you're recognized to close, and waive closing. Members, the question is the adoption of FA949. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 34 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the amendment, Mr. President.

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KELLY: FA949 is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Hansen would move to amend with AM1928.

KELLY: Senator Hansen, you're recognized to open.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. All right. Colleagues, I, I had an amendment on Senator Hughes' bill. I talked to her about it before. LB110, with the HHS committee amendment, states that the ethical principle of informed consent in medical practice is critical to the trust of a patient's-- places in a healthcare provider, and B, a patient has a rational expectation to have control over the patient's medical decisions. The amendment that I attached to Senator Hughes' bill has-- comes from a bill that I introduced earlier, that deals with this exact same thing. Her bill only goes on to allow for the medical procedure described in LB110 if, quote, an individual authorized to make healthcare decisions for the patient has given written consent. I'd like to, I'd like to continue with this same line of reasoning and introduce AM1928. The newborn screening that we all are familiar with is also a test. It is also a medical procedure. It requires taking blood from an individual and currently, in Nebraska, it happens without consent. 47 other states allow for the consent of this procedure. If a parent looks to have a say in the process, they are threatened with the removal of their child. And in one case, the child was taken from their parents for months until the test was given and came back with the child being perfectly healthy. Every state across the country provides this newborn screening test within 48 hours of an infant's birth. It is required, just like it is in Nebraska. However, what is different about Nebraska is that while 47 other states allow for a parent to opt out of the blood draw. Nebraska doesn't. While 47 other states provide for informed consent, Nebraska doesn't. Those 47 other states have found success. They haven't found an increase in terrible outcomes. They have only found that most every person with informed consent chose to get the test done. AM1928, colleagues, takes language suggested by the Attorney General that would protect doctors and provide for specific policies to follow and ensure that every baby would still be given the test, unless, that is, a parent has to object with an informed consent document. In fact, parents wouldn't even be given the option to refuse the blood draw unless the doctor or hospital wanted to. It would only be for those families who, for religious or personal beliefs, ask to opt out. I'd like to preface this conversation with consideration towards who has ultimate responsibility of a child. It is not the state. It's not DHHS, and it's not a physician. It is the parent. 47 other states

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acknowledge that parents have a right to object to newborn screening or at least have the option to opt out, and we are unique in demanding a medical procedure to be done without the right of refusal. My question to you is, what other medical procedure in our state is mandatory? And I'd like to reiterate, this test will be given to every newborn. Even though we don't do this for any other procedure, the option not to have the test won't even be offered. The only kids who would get the test would be parents who specifically ask. The Attorney General's suggested language protects the doctors. We have spent many hours in this body discussing parental rights and parental involvement in the medical decisions of their child. We won't force testing it on any other area, even though early detection would be beneficial. AM1928 is informed consent. We should, we should be the 48th state to support informed consent. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hansen. Senator Fredrickson, you are recognized to speak.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Good morning, Nebraskans. I have some questions here. Would Senator Hansen yield to a question, please?

KELLY: Senator Hansen, would you yield to question?

HANSEN: Yes.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you, Senator Hansen. So I am just reading this, so I just want to confirm. So you're trying to amend Senator Hughes' bill with AM 1928. We heard a bill similar to this, I think, in committee. What, what was the original bill number?

HANSEN: I believe, LB310.

FREDRICKSON: LB310? OK. Is that in committee or out of committee yet?

HANSEN: I believe it's still in committee.

FREDRICKSON: OK. So we haven't execed on this?

HANSEN: Yeah. I, I didn't know for sure what I wanted to do with it. And so Senator Hughes' bill deals with this almost exact same thing in the exact same way. And so, this would just be a mandatory medical procedure that we would then allow the parents to have informed consent. We did contact the Attorney General's Office, and the language that I'm putting in the amendment is suggested by the

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Attorney General's Office to make sure that it protects the doctors and makes sure that there is appropriate informed consent form provided by the department that the parent can sign, if they have to ask for it. So they have to ask for this.

FREDRICKSON: In your bill, LB310-- I'm just trying to pull up my notes here, because we heard this last year in committee, I believe. This is the one that a parent could waive the newborn screening--

HANSEN: Yes.

FREDRICKSON: --for infants? OK. Thank you, Senator Hansen. So colleagues, I have a number of concerns about this. This is-- I-- and I am not fully prepared to discuss this because I just am learning about this right now. But we did have a hearing on this bill, last year, in committee. There were a number of very, very serious concerns that were brought to the table during that hearing. As we just confirmed with Senator Hansen, the HHS Committee has not yet had the opportunity to discuss the bill in executive session. We have not yet had the opportunity to exec on this bill. And I have not spoken to any of the opposition that came in for the hearing, which, by the way, was, was numerous. So newborn screenings, for those who are unfamiliar, they are a screening that is provided to all newborn babies in the state of Nebraska. These screenings test for a number of different conditions. Some of these conditions, if not detected, can result in lifelong damages and lifelong disabilities that can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. If these are detected early on and treatment is provided, it would-- it could totally mitigate some of these long-term concerns. And so waiting into eliminating this screening or giving-- or sort of, kind of what we're doing here, on a bill that is related to informed consent for a pelvic exam, I can appreciate Senator Hansen's creative use of germanness here, but I think we're talking about incredibly different things here, and I-- I'm going to probably get back in the queue. I don't know if Senator Hansen's planning to pull this, if he's serious, but if he is serious about this, I think we really need to pump the brakes here and not take a vote on this today because this was a, this was a pretty contentious hearing and had a lot of opposition. And like I said, we have not yet execed on this bill. We haven't had the opportunity to discuss whether or not there's any improvements that can be made with some of the key stakeholders-- the providers, the physicians, who are here today. So I might run out to the Rotunda real quick, to see what they have to say about this. But as of now, I would caution folks against supporting this amendment. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you Senator Fredrickson. Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues. It's amazing how quick we pivot here from one thing to another. And so, I feel like Senator Fredrickson. And we haven't had the due diligence and time with the pivot in this coming up as a, a, a floor amendment here, for this bill. I have talked about this on the mic before, and do a lot of work in maternal and child health. And actually, Senator Hansen and I do have some things that we agree on and have been working together towards, which I'm very appreciative. And I have lots of pause and concern about this AM1928, and what does it mean around newborn screenings and the opt-in and the communication. I think we need to get information from the folks that came into opposition. And I wonder, Senator Hansen, would you yield to a question?

KELLY: Senator Hansen, would you yield to question?

HANSEN: Yes.

SPIVEY: Good morning, Senator. My computer is not working. Technology never works when you need to. And so I'm not able to pull up some of the transcripts and just some of the opposition testimony. But I'm wondering, in the midst of the hearing last year, exec not taking this up-- the committee not taking this up yet in exec and then coming to this place. Have you worked with any of the opposition on this amendment that you're presenting today?

HANSEN: No, I did not. The op-- op-- opposition was pretty obstinate about this. I think they feel that we should force parents to get this test done and if not physically remove the child from the house, to make sure this medical procedure is done. I think anything outside of that, they're not going to allow for.

SPIVEY: OK. Thank you, Senator. I can appreciate that color added to my question. I do feel like there are, there are years of history and medical procedures and academic works that talk about the importance of these types of screenings. How does that work within just like public health settings, right? Like, how do we ensure that, especially as we think about kids, vaccinations, medicines, and things that are happening in these screenings, really alleviate some of the terrible diseases and things that not only can impact that one infant, but overall. We've had this conversation around the, the pandemic. What does it mean from a public health perspective? And so, I have concerns

about this, AM1928. What does it mean for the work that is being done in infant and fetal medicine, and then not having some sort of resolution or even feedback from the experts in that field, to be able to weigh in on AM1928. I, I, I appreciate the AG ensuring that it will protect doctors, but the AG is not a doctor. That's not his area of expertise. And so, I do caution us to move forward with this measure because the AG says that it's green lit, versus that we are trusting our medical experts and doctors that are closest to this issue, that are working with families day in and day out to say here's how we ensure that we have healthy babies being born in Nebraska, this is what this needs to look like, and here is the standard of care. I'm an absolute advocate for informed consent. I think parents should understand what's in front of them. And this feels very rushed and sudden, which I know can happen on the floor when we're in debate and pivoting to different things, but I don't think this is ready to be voted on, especially if the committee has not even taken this up to see where they have landed. So I would encourage your red vote on AM1928 at this time. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Spivey. Senator Hughes, you're recognized to speak.

HUGHES: Thank you, Mr. President. I appreciate Senator Hansen's creativity on adding this to this bill. I, I think that it is maybe not in the right procedural steps for this. But I've been thinking about this, and I actually want to ask him a question. Will you answer a question, Senator Hansen?

KELLY: Senator Hansen, would you yield to a question?

HANSEN: Yes.

HUGHES: OK. Thank you. So, not gonna-- we'll just spice things up here. If you have a home birth, what happens-- how does that test get done? Because in Nebraska, you have to have that blood prick test for the baby, to test those items. How do they do that if you've given birth at home?

HANSEN: Yeah. Right now, in the state of Nebraska, if you have a home birth, you are still required by law to get this done. And if not, they will physically come to your house and take your child and get it done.

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HUGHES: So you either-- you, you probably would take your baby in, then, to get that done. If that's--

HANSEN: Yes, or you'll be charged probably with child neglect, and they'll take the child and do it anyway.

HUGHES: OK, interesting, not to bring up the home birth things. But, I am now going to yield my time to Senator Hansen.

KELLY: Senator Hansen, that's 3 minutes, 50 seconds.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. President. It seems like there's a little consternation on the floor about this amendment. It still doesn't mean I won't find a vehicle for it. This is an import-- this is an important amendment for parental rights in the state of Nebraska. 47 other states have some kind of way for a parent to object to this medical procedure, taking blood draws for genetic information, albeit in the name of safety. I get it. But right now, in the state of Nebraska, if you do not get this done, they're taking your kid from you. I just happen to think that's wrong, and so do 47 other states. And I worked with the attorney-- Attorney General's Office to make sure we have appropriate language in this bill. Because, yes, Senator Spivey, I will agree. They are not medical experts, but they do understand the law. And that's what this is written about, to make sure that there's legal protections for medical doctors and the parents, and make sure there's proper, written informed consent from the department. So this is the appropriate solution, and I'm glad we're having this conversation. But remember this the next time you have a family member who has a kid, and they have a newborn that they are forced to get this done now. The government forces you to get this done-- a medical procedure. Now, even if that notion sounds asinine to you, you should be in favor of this amendment. And so, that's why-- as you can tell, I might be a little passionate about it, but I think it's important, and this will protect a lot of parental rights in the state of Nebraska. But in the essence of collegiality and the Speaker told me I have to, I will withdraw my amendment. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: So ordered.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator, I have nothing further on the bill.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that LB110 be advanced to E&R for engrossing.

KELLY: That is a debatable motion. Senator DeBoer, you're recognized to speak. Senator, Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak on a debatable motion, and waive. Senator Hansen, you're recognized to speak on the motion-- waives. Senator Quick, Senator Quick, you're recognized to speak. Members, you heard the previous motion. All those in favor, say aye. All those opposed, say nay. LB110 is advanced for E&R Engrossing. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Select File, LB397. Senator, I have nothing on the bill.

KELLY: Senator Guereca, you're recognized for a motion.

GUERECA: Mr. President, I move that LB397 be advanced to E&R for engrossing.

KELLY: That's a debatable motion, and Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President, and I yield my time to Senator John Cavanaugh.

KELLY: Senator John Cavanaugh, you have 4 minutes, 50 seconds.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you Mr. President. Thank you, Senator Spivey. And I'm sorry. Mr. Clerk, do I-- I have an amendment filed on this bill? OK. Thank you. I yield my time back to the Clerk.

KELLY: Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, items for the record. Notice of committee hearings from the Natural Resources Committee; and a priority motion. Senator Meyer would move to adjourn the body-- excuse me, amendment to be printed from Senator Lippincott to LB548. Senator Meyer would move to adjourn the body until 9:00 a.m.

KELLY: The question is the motion to adjourn. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, say nay. The Legislature is adjourned.