

SENATOR VICKERS: Mr. President and members, I rise to oppose the Doyle amendment. I don't think that it is good policy for us to treat everybody exactly the same in this area. I think there was a good decision made a few years ago. The problem is I don't think we have adjusted it over the years. There are many states that have had a much higher ratio of difference for the negative balance employers of Nebraska over the last few years. The problem is, now I understand that there is a problem in the construction industry as far as unemployment is concerned right now, but I don't think that this is the way to solve that problem. The problem is caused by a lot more things than the unemployment rate. Last year, and I don't know what the figures are this year, I am not on that committee this year, but last year the positive balance employers were asked to subsidize, if you will, the fund to the tune of about \$17 million. In other words, the negative balance employers caused the positive balance employers to pay 17 million more dollars into the fund than the positive balance employers' employees took out. Now if you believe in use fees, if you do believe that those people who use the program should pay a little bit more for it, then I don't think you should vote for the Doyle amendment. There are employers out there today, and I think we all know some of them, who actually use this system, who make a determination, I believe, that it is cheaper to lay somebody off, let unemployment pay them over the winter, than it is for them to pay them. And we have some employers that do that on a regular basis, some of them because of the type of employment they have, but I also suggest that some of those people that they lay off they could keep on if they really were forced to if they really were forced to look at it from an economic point of view. If it costs them more to lay off, they wouldn't lay quite so many of them off, I suggest to you. But it is much cheaper to lay somebody off rather than pay them a salary during the winter when maybe you didn't have quite that much work for them to do, and then let everybody else in the state help subsidize, if you will, the payment to that individual. Now it seems wrong to me to say that those people who use the system, who have more employees drawing unemployment than anybody else to the extent where their balance is in a negative situation and we have some employers whose negative balance is in the millions of dollars, and to ask the average employer in this state to raise their rates, somebody up and down Main Street that hasn't laid anybody off for five years, but yet sees their unemployment rate go up simply to assist those employers who are laying off more and more people, I think is wrong. I don't believe the 1 or 2 percent difference that the committee has and it is 2 percent under the bill right now, I don't think that is too much to ask. As I indicated earlier, many other states over the last