

that this is the time for this Legislature to increase unemployment benefits to the extent proposed. There are problems in the country. Those of us who visited with Vice-President Bush a month or so ago indicated this to him. As a matter of fact, I specifically stated that there is a prairie fire which is sweeping the midlands which is nearly out of control in terms of our ag crisis. I further suggested to him that I had a terrible fear, and it has been confirmed, that the ripple effect from the ag crisis has now engulfed our main streets. Those of you who are living in the urban areas perhaps are not quite as aware of this phenomenon as those of us outstate. In my community alone we had a manufacturer with 900 employees not long ago cut back to 450. The plant closed, announced a closing within the last two weeks, the last 450 people. A clothing store on my main street which has been there since 1908 has now announced its closing. The ag crisis is affecting the business community and I am told through my mail, maybe you have gotten some of the same mail, that this is not the time to increase the cost of doing business. I, therefore, offer this amendment with some trepidation. My people are telling me there should be no increase. Inasmuch as we have had no increase in benefits for the past two years, I feel that perhaps a modest increase of about 5 percent might be in order. My amendment is simply an effort to restrain the increase that the Hall amendment calls for of some 28 plus percent. Our last increase was in 1983, two years ago. The increase at that time was 13.2 percent and it covered a period of four years, from 1979 to 1983. During that period there was no increase. So in 1983, two years ago, we increased the benefits 13.2 percent and I as a result feel that the 5 percent today that I am asking for is most reasonable. The 5 percent increase in the maximum weekly benefits which I am requesting also corresponds to the cost of living increase as we have known it for the past couple of years. Commerce Clearing House in a publication "Cost of Living for Wage Earners" indicates that the cumulative increase in cost of living for the past two years is about 6.8 percent. That translates into 3.5 percent in 1983 and an increase in the cost of living of 3.3 percent in 1984. So as a result, again I think the 5 percent increase which I am requesting compares very favorably with the cumulative two year increase in the cost of living, as we have seen during the past two years. I think the 5 percent increase is reasonable. I think it is responsible in light of the adverse conditions which we have seen in the last year or