

the 45th highest benefit levels in the country. That means there is only four or five states that have lower benefits than we do. And to go up to \$126 at that level is pretty miserly. \$120 to \$126 is almost no increase at all and certainly does not put us in the level at which we would be at all disadvantaged in terms of other states' unemployment benefits. The big concern about our employers has got to be competitively how do they relate to other states. You know the thing that I could relate to is if our employers are paying high unemployment benefit levels versus other states. That puts them at a competitive disadvantage. We don't want that in Nebraska. We want to encourage our employers, we want to encourage our businesses to be competitive. Yet what is happening is our unemployment benefits are much lower. It puts us at the advantage because they are so low and yet still there is complaints and opposition to raising the benefits even the small amount that Senator Hall is suggesting. The \$155 level would put us much more in the mainstream of maximum benefit levels which should not be an anticompetitive situation for our businesses. It would be the sort of level at which most other businesses have to pay unemployment benefits in the rest of the country. So, really, we have an advantage now. The increase Senator Hall was suggesting would put us at the midrange and thus not at a disadvantage and I don't think it is an unfair increase. I think we can negotiate perhaps some change to that but the \$126 is far too low an increase. Remember, it has been two years since we adjusted the level and that level was too low to begin with in the first place. If you have a level that is in the middle and you just try and keep up with inflation, you have a much stronger argument to make a small increase than when you are at the lower end and you are way below what other states are providing and you need to catch up a little bit in terms of an increased benefit. I would not support an increase above \$155 and I would not support the benefit increase that the table adjustment would have that Senator Hall is trying to change.

SPEAKER NICHOL: One minute.

SENATOR WESELY: I am very glad that he is making those changes. One minute?

SPEAKER NICHOL: Yes.

SENATOR WESELY: I would just suggest to you that from all