

currently sits at \$75 million. After payments are made, claims are paid out, we have over \$75 million in that fund. We, as Nebraska, have the most stringent rules regarding eligibility for unemployment. We're four times the national average and we are in the best shape for our size in terms of the liquidity or the assets that we have in our unemployment fund. I would say that the \$132 is a figure that I have talked about with Senator Barrett and others who oppose this amendment and I have been nothing but aboveboard, letting them know just exactly what I intended to do. I think that the increase is fair and the increase is justified. We... a couple of weeks ago on General File, a majority of the body stated that there needed to be an increase to the unemployment compensation. All we're looking at here with the \$132 is a level of that increase. I think a \$12 increase which would not be an increase to the average, the average benefit amount of more than \$6. Currently our maximum is \$120. The average amount that is drawn is \$99. With this raise to \$132 the average amount would only increase to \$105. The average person no matter what... if they were making over \$5.75 an hour, if they were making \$10 they would only be drawing the maximum, but the average is running \$105 with an increase to \$132. That is not a lot of money. I feel that that is only fair. We have the money in our fund. We are not going to deplete our fund with this increase. We are, basically, distributing it to those people who need it. I would urge your support to bring this bill back for the amendment. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: Senator Nichol.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I would like to draw your attention to something. I don't know what the magic number on 216 is, but I say it is high time we should be finding out since we're on Final Reading. The point I am making is that we have been spending much time on Final Reading with amending, attempt to amend and doing everything with the bills on Final Reading except reading them for the final time. Now you realize, of course, when you do this, it delays it and it comes up on Final Reading again. And bills have been up more than once, more than twice, more than three times on Final Reading and have been amended. I am suggesting that with 16 days left all of the General File bills that we're handling from now on... Mr. President, could I have attention? I have competition.