

inflation. Without any increase at all inflation will erode all of the benefits entirely because under the current system the figures are set in statute regardless of the fact the value of the dollar is deflating. Now this bill incorporates one of the 19 essential recommendations of President Nixon's National Commission on State Workers Compensation Laws that issued a report in 1974. One of the 19 essential recommendations is that the maximum workmen's compensation level be at least 100 percent. As I indicated, of the 42 states that use this system, tie the maximum level into the state's average weekly wage, 31 percent are at 100 percent or better. The first year of application of this bill at the 80 percent figure we would be the same as or less than 33 states. So you can see this is by no means an innovative or radical proposal. It is a system used by most states. Now let me just briefly remind you as to how the...how this system for compensating injured workers on the job works in the State of Nebraska because I know that the figure, maximum workmen's compensation benefits, probably does not mean a whole lot to very many of you. The way the current system operates is that if you are injured on the job, and usually it is through no fault of the worker, this is not a welfare sort of system, this is a system to take care of injured workers who would much prefer to be working. If an individual is injured on the job, and is off work for 5 weeks, or 10 weeks, or 15 weeks, or longer, why the worker is entitled to two-thirds of his or her average weekly wage, up to a maximum, under current law, of \$225. So in other words if you earn \$300 a week, and you are injured on the job, you are entitled to \$200. You are entitled to two-thirds of your average weekly wage. I wonder if...I don't think I'm getting the attention of a lot of people, Mr. President. I wonder if...

SENATOR CARSTEN: (Gavel.) Can we have a little quiet, please. Senator Hoagland is trying to explain his bill. Let's try and be attentive to what he is saying to us, please. Thank you. Senator Hoagland.

SENATOR HOAGLAND: Thank you, Mr. President. Let me resume, ladies and gentlemen, in my explanation of how the current system works. All right. If you are injured, and again nobody wants to be injured, and you are off work for 5 or 10 weeks, your workers' compensation benefits are computed as two-thirds of your average weekly wage. You don't get everything you made. The most you are going to get is