

SENATOR ASHFORD: 2986, okay, thank you.

CLERK: That's the first one, then your amendment to that.

SENATOR ASHFORD: That's correct.

CLERK: The amendment to that is AM3768.

SENATOR ASHFORD: Okay, thank you. Madam President, members, I stand at this point in support of this bill for many of the public policy reasons that Senator Wesely has rightly stated. And I have always, certainly as a gut reaction to this type of measure, have always been supportive that we need to encourage as much as possible and as reasonable a way as possible our largest employers to become more responsive to family needs and I think this bill does that in a very unobtrusive way. But one of the concerns I've always had in dealing with this type of legislation is the how do we apportion the cost of family leave policies. And I looked at other countries, and obviously the European tradition is to provide family leave and in many cases the European countries, Sweden I know, pay the total cost of family leave, the governments of many European countries pay a portion of or all of the cost of family leave. In this case, in this bill we are not talking about paid leave which differentiates to a great extent the European family leave policies with that that is being proposed by Senator Wesely. But there still is a cost and I've been interested in reading many of the studies that have come out, the SBA study and others that come out talking...have come out that have talked about the cost and that the cost is relatively minimal. I think the SBA study talks about anywhere between \$2.00 and \$7.00 per employee for the cost of running a family leave program, but we are talking, at least in the State of Nebraska about a substantial number of employees, 328,000 employees in 1990 would be covered by family leave, so it does have, will have even if the cost is minimal, a financial impact. And the question becomes, who should bear that financial impact? And in thinking about this bill I concluded that the cost should be borne by the society as a whole and I think that's why in governments in Europe that have more extensive family leave policies that the governments pay a lot of tax dollars for family leave, that it is a...we are asking employers, on the employers' side of this, we are asking employers to, in effect, conduct a public policy or to effect a public policy judgment made by state government and that we as a