

Testimony heard to raise minimum wage

Supporters of the proposed bill hope to improve poverty, despite what some argue.

BY GEORGE GREEN

Workers on the bottom rung of the financial ladder may get to step up soon.

Members of the Business and Labor Committee heard testimony Monday on a bill that would boost Nebraska's minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.15 per hour.

The bill breaks the increases into two 50 cent bumps, the first of which would occur Oct. 1. The next would occur in April 2002.

Advocates of LB633 said the wage spike would help Nebraska's poorest families who generally hold jobs that pay minimum wage.

Opponents, though, said the bill would do nothing more than increase prices on goods and services, which would hurt the poor families the bill aimed to help.

Sen. Chris Beutler of Lincoln, who introduced the bill, said it addressed a fundamental injustice in Nebraska's economic system.

"The 8 percent under the minimum wage are simply being treated unfairly," he said.

But Kathy Siefken, director of the Nebraska Grocery Industry Association, said the vast majority of Nebraska businesses already paid above the minimum wage.

They have to, she said, because the state's unemployment rate is so low.

"In Nebraska, employers are scrounging for employees," she said.

In addition, she said, the bill stifles business expansion and forces owners to jack up prices to offset the additional expenses.

She said the proposals may go so far as to force businesses to close shop or to relocate to neighboring states that had more affordable business climates.

Beutler wasn't convinced his bill would send businesses scurrying to other states.

He said the retailing and restaurant industries house most of the minimum wage positions in the state, and these industries were ensclosed in their respective markets.

"Arby's is not going to relocate to Iowa," he said.

Milo Mumgaard, executive director of the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, agreed that most businesses won't head for the border.

Rather, he said the bill would help struggling Nebraskans get back on their feet.

"Nebraska has a problem with low wages for these thousands of families, particularly those coming off welfare," he said.

Ron Sedlacek, a lobbyist for the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said Nebraska's poorest workers deserve a hand.

But, he said, Beutler's bill would help more part-time and young workers than people who actually live in poverty.

"This does little to help the working poor get out of poverty," he said.

These people need educational programs and training, he said.

Sedlacek also suggested Nebraska wait for the federal government to sort out the issue before enacting the plan, he said.

Beutler said waiting for the federal government to make a move was foolish; increasing the minimum wage was the logical thing to do.

An increased minimum wage, Beutler said, would cut down on the amount of people who depend on the government's social programs, like welfare.

"Why do we whip ourselves into big government because businesses don't pay enough?" he asked.

More importantly, he said, the bill would allow Nebraska's poorest citizens to live "life in little more dignified fashion."

Speaker addresses 'maternal instinct'

BY MARK BALDRIDGE

High rates of infant abandonment in certain historical contexts have caused some researchers to deny the concept of "maternal instinct" in humans as a "bourgeois fantasy," Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, an expert in primate sociobiology and author, said Monday.

Addressing the Lied Center for Performing Arts audience of 450 at the E.N. Thompson Forum, Hrdy countered this position with one of her own, developed in her recent book "Mother Nature: A history of Mothers, Infants and Natural Selection."

Using slides, quotes from the literature of the subject and regular doses of humor, Hrdy proposed that mothering instincts in humans depended largely on the support resources available in which mothers projected raising their young.

"Local conditions shape the context of expression of maternal instinct," she said. "Wherever assistance rearing infants is in short supply and other forms of birth control are unavailable, abandonment and infanticide have been practiced."

Looking to conditions in the Pleistocene era, such as 18th century France and 21st century Texas where it is now legal to abandon infants in certain locations, including places like fire stations, within 72 hours after birth, Hrdy put forth the theory that human beings are "coopera-

tive breeders."

Given the vast investment human mothers must make to rear children - among other primates, weaned infants are able to provision themselves, while this is far from true with humans - mothers must have recourse to a support system consisting of other mothers, individuals who are not yet breeding and older kin past breeding age. The theory is known as the "grandmother hypothesis" of the evolution of child care in humans.

Other factors that contributed to the activation of child rearing instinct seemed to be hormonal. In one experiment, conducted in 19th century Paris, mothers who were forced to breast feed their infants for eight days after giving birth later abandoned their offspring at much lower rates than mothers not so forced.

Hormonal changes, triggered by the release of prolactin in nursing mothers, were also credited with jump-starting the maternal instinct. The children of mothers who either abandoned infants or farmed out their feeding to "wet nurses" or women who would be paid to breast feed other women's children, do show a significantly lower survival rate, Hrdy said.

She concluded that many factors, impinging on a "maternal instinct" that was not automatically engaged in all mothers, worked to create the spectrum of maternal responses to offspring observed in humans today.

Group of UNL students to enter in world finals

FINALS from page 1

the 1999 world finals held in the Netherlands.

"They received an honorable mention that year," Riedesel said. "Going in to this year's contest, they have more training, more confidence and should do very well."

Sabalka said he thought the team had improved dramatically since the competition in the Netherlands.

"I think we are a thousand times better than we were two years ago," he said.

"Or at least 250 times better," Guo said.

Though thousands of teams competed, only 64 advanced to the international competition. UNL earned a place at the world finals by beating 109 teams to take the top spot at the North American North Central regional competition in Lincoln in November.

This year's world finals includes teams from Harvard University, the University of

Hong Kong, the American University of Cairo and the California Institute of Technology. The UNL team has been preparing for months for the competition.

"We have been practicing three days a week," said Brown.

Said Sabalka: "To do well you have to learn how to program fast and accurately."

The competition has students working on complex problems using C, C++, Java and Pascal programming languages. The five-hour event awards teams for their logic, strategy and speed.

No matter how the team finishes in Vancouver, the students said their efforts had already attracted attention. After their first-place finish at the regional competition, the undergraduates have been receiving e-mail messages from companies looking to recruit them.

"Our goal this year is to place in the top 15, but we would really like to make the top 10," Brown said. "If you make the top 10, you get prizes."

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ASUN Student Government Run-Off Election March 6, 2001

The NO BULL Party would like to offer you, the student body, a voter guide for today's runoff election....

SCORE! **NO BULL**

- ✓ **Grandfather Tuition Clause***
This is a blind promise intended to make you vote for SCORE!. After researching the idea for hours and asking SCORE! how this was going to be done, we have still not discovered how they intend to make this work, let alone, get it passed by the Board of Regents.
- ✓ **Affordable Books**
SCORE! has proposed a book swap that would be run through the ASUN office in order to ensure that students aren't "taken out behind the whoopin' shed" by the University bookstore and their lack of a buyback program. The NO BULL party thinks that a better solution to this problem would be to hold the bookstore to their contract that states that they will pay up to 60% of a books original value if it is being used during the next term or semester.
- ✓ **Diversity/ International Students**
SCORE! wants to fight to ensure that International Students are still allowed to run for executive positions within ASUN by lobbying against Regent Restructuring. Who's arguing?
- ✓ **Changes in Dead Week Policy**
For too long the University's Dead Week Policy has taken advantage of students and deprived them of the proper preparation for Finals Week that we need and deserve. The NO BULL party wants to work with the Academic Senate to make sure that some progress is made toward improving this outdated policy.
- ✓ **Switch to a new email system**
The University's current system, BIGRED, is outdated and not being used by many students as their sole email provider. Many of us have separate hotmail and yahoo accounts that are more accessible and easier to use than our current system. The NO BULL party proposes that we move our accounts from the BIGRED system to zshusers.com in order to receive the same service from our University accounts as we get from our outside email providers.
- ✓ **Judicial Advocacy Program**
The Judicial Advocacy Program, under a NO BULL Administration, would be created to help defend students who have been accused of violating the University's Code of Conduct. Under the current system, the only person offering counsel to an accused student is the person who is also prosecuting them. We just don't think that this is fair.

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VOTE NO BULL.

* SCORE! Platform Headings are taken from actual SCORE propaganda.

NO BULL

MIXAN-WESTERING

ASUN STUDENT GOVERNMENT RUNOFF ELECTION MARCH 6, 2001
PAID FOR BY TREASURER MICHELLE SCHIRGE