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FLOOR DEBATE

April 8, 2002            LB 1085, 1149

opening on the Janssen amendment, AM3605, to AM3503 to LB 1085. (Visitors introduced.) On with the discussion of the Janssen amendment. Senator Jensen.

SENATOR JENSEN: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. I cannot support the reduction from 30 cents to 20 cents. As you know when I introduced LB 1149 of which the Revenue, then, Committee amended this into their package, it was at 50 cents. And certainly a poll done between the 18th and 22nd of January shows that the citizens of Nebraska support that. In (inaudible)...I did reduce it down to 30 cents to help out the Revenue Committee and their objection to the 50-cents increase. But it takes a 30-cent increase really to make any significant difference in the reduction of smoking. Then also this 20 cents goes into the General Fund. There is nothing that goes into the Health Care Cash Fund. After two years...let me just give you a few statistics that I think are very, very meaningful. In the first seven years of the program of smoking reductions in California, \$390 million in direct medical costs were saved just from fewer smoking, cause heart attacks and strokes. There are substantial benefits that could be expected in any state within only a few years of reduced adult smoking prevalence if sustained tobacco control programs are funded. The California tobacco control program has been credited with preventing 33,000 deaths from heart disease from 1988 until 1997. By reducing smoking among pregnant women, California's program reduced the number of low birth weight babies, with a substantial reduction of \$107 million in related healthcare costs over the past seven years. The reduction is predictable, short-term benefits of sustained tobacco control funding at the state level. Since 1988, the year before the California tobacco prevention program began, the rates of lung cancer and "bronchias" cancer in California have declined more than five times as fast as they did in a sample of other states in the United States--14 percent reduction as opposed to 2.7 percent reduction. The decline is not only saving thousands of lives, but also saving the state millions of dollars in medical costs. Projected fund savings are in the billions. That's California. A 30-cent increase will make substantial difference in adult smoking but, even more than that, substantial difference in teenage smoking and in young people ever taking up the habit in