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SENATOR HARTNETT: Thank you, Senator Engel. Give my time back.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Hartnett. (Visitors introduced.) Senator Raikes, on the Engel amendment.

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. President and members. What we have before us now, in my opinion, is a bad idea raised to the second power. Maybe mathematically you call that a bad idea squared. I don't, as I mentioned before, like the notion of addressing this problem with an increase in the sales tax rate. I also don't like the variable rate idea. I think there are a number of important reasons to keep in mind. One is, as Senator Wickersham pointed out, we are trying to move with other states toward a streamlining of sales tax rates so that we can resolve the difficulties that we run into on interstate commerce regarding sales tax rates. I think it's very important that we stick with that, and a variable sales tax rate as being proposed in the Engel amendment takes us in exactly the...the opposite direction. Another item that's been mentioned that I'll only reemphasize is, if you're going to take autos out, then what else? Certainly there are other things that...that if you can argue autos ought to be exempted from an increase, then you have other things. The point is that if you do that, you have started down that slope, and I think it is, indeed, a very slippery slope. There is another slope that perhaps we should mention. Senator Engel mentioned that this money would go into the Highway Trust Fund. We don't need the additional money, I think was his point, although it was later pointed out that...that certainly the money in the Highway Trust Fund could be used to...to reduce gas taxes. But what about this idea? Why don't you do this? Instead of reducing the tax on autos that goes into the Highway Trust Fund, just take the extra half cent that would go in the Highway Trust Fund and not put it in there; use that in the General Fund. Now isn't that a good idea? Maybe then, as we get down the road, there's some other monies that don't need to go into the Highway Trust Fund so, again, we've...we've broken a solid program that I think the state has to...to make those monies or to...to insist that those monies go into the Highway Trust Fund. I think there's good reason to do that. I think we ought to stick with that program. This jeopardizes that, and I think that, along with other