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LB 407

opposing the amendment...I mean supporting amendment, and hope that you will too. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Stuhr. Senator Raikes on your amendment to LB 407.

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. President, members. I wanted to add a few comments about the funding for this...or proposed funding for this program. Senator Jensen and others are exactly right. There was a program that was in place for three years. It ended last year. So that was not a General Fund funded...sorry for that confusing language...a General Fund funded program. That was funded at \$21 million, \$7 million a year, from off-the-top money out of the Tobacco Trust and the IGT monies. When you have a program that you've proposed to run for three years, it's run the three years, you go by a year with no funding, and then you start a program using a different funding source, General Funds, I think it's fair to call that a new program. And if I'm in error, it's my error, because that's the sense in which I've called it a new program. The central issue here is priority. Again, not to pick on Senator Jensen, but he talked about the success of the program and so on. We're beyond the stage where you can look at one program at a time and decide whether or not it has merit. I think, generally speaking, you're going to find every program can be supported with evidence of merit. You...we're to the point where you have to say, is this a top priority or isn't it? And if it's not a very top priority, we simply can't afford to do it now, particularly if it's a new commitment of General Funds. And that's exactly what we're talking about here. It was mentioned that the Governor recommended this in his budget. I would point out to you also that he recommended an additional 20-cent per pack increase in cigarette taxes. The...or the Revenue Committee did not go along with that recommendation, so the Appropriations Committee did pick this up, but I would argue to you that the setting is somewhat different. If you're collecting additional tax money from cigarette smokers, then maybe it makes sense to use part of that money for this program. If you're not, I think the story is different. Another point that was, I think, clarified, it was \$7 million a year for three years; \$5 million of that was hijacked, so to speak. It had not