

Senator Warner have a half cent sales tax proposal? Which we are going to be seeing in the next several days. Isn't that what the Board of Equalization supposed to be doing? And, the corporate tax increase which we just now moved to Final Reading. The Legislature sets tax rates. The Legislature de facto sets tax rates and we have to look at the appropriate mix between those rates. Now, Senator Carsten says we are not going to be out of the thick of this in one year. On the other hand, I don't think it is fair to say that the cigarette smokers have to see us all the way to the end of the economic problems. I would suggest that we give this a year, come back and see if the current tax rates in sales, corporate, income, excise taxes all are equitable compared to each other. By making this a two year sunset we have simply thrown in the towel and say regardless of what economic conditions occur, regardless of how much recovery there is, regardless of how much of a penalty or how punitive this kind of a tax increase is on a portion of the public, we wash our hands of doing our job which is setting appropriate tax rates. As far as I am concerned this is where the buck stops and if these are difficult times, then I wonder if we don't need to make decisions as far ahead as we reasonably can see but not that far into the future where we tie our hands. I would suggest that Senator Warner is no better seer than the rest of us as to what economic conditions we are going to have two years from now. If that is the case I'm hard pressed to see that we need to extend this authorization a second year. The Governor has talked to us about inter-fund cash transfers. Now, does Senator Warner want to sell that as a two year package? Does he want a sunset that doesn't go from now until the end of our problems, which is roughly in August or in September, or is he looking to have this be some permanent kind of authority? I think not. The Governor asked us personally, for short term fiscal tools to solve short term fiscal problems. That is what 753 is in the hopper to do and by putting a two year sunset on it, we are simply saying we are going to continue to gouge the cigarette smoker for a longer period of time because there is a potential for the need for this revenue which may or may not come about in a years time. I oppose the Warner amendment, I hope the body will as well. It is our obligation to review the equity of these various tax levels in the coming legislative session and I don't want us to sit on our hands and simply say, we are not going to look at this for another two years.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Dworak.

SENATOR DWORAK: Mr. President and colleagues, I think this whole exercise is or this whole debate is an exercise in futility