

Barrett would move to place LB 683 on General File, pursuant to Rule 3, Section 19. Senator Landis offered his motion on March 14, Mr. President. It is on page 1147 of the Journal.

PRESIDENT: Thank you. Senator Landis, please.

SENATOR LANDIS: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. LB 683 is commonly called the MIREF bill, Municipal Infrastructure Redevelopment Fund Act, and the bill, basically, takes \$4.5 million of cigarette tax money, directs it away from the General Fund and into an Infrastructure Redevelopment Fund to be distributed throughout the state on a per capita basis to the municipalities of this state. It is stated in the bill that this expectation of appropriation will continue for 20 years, knowing full well that one Legislature cannot bind another, but that this is our stated intention. One can call this, I think, a dedication of a revenue source. Those who want to shake a shibboleth in our face might want to call it an earmarking. I think that is the cross upon which I have been nailed before the Appropriations Committee by Senator Hannibal from the great municipality of Omaha. The measure is, I think, timely and also I think it is one that deserves our attention as a body because it, like the issue itself in municipalities, has fallen to the back burner. Infrastructure is the least attractive. It is the least compelling political agenda that I know. It is the one that doesn't turn out angry hordes of people. It doesn't turn out a long list of clients who are in need of a social service. In a municipal budget, it is the first thing to go and the last thing to stay. In the state budget, actually, frankly, we have this same thing. We get along to that budget crunch time and we have to choose between a new program that is very hot and has a good long list of providers, service vendors, and clients who want it, or the 309 funds that maintain state functions, and what happens, the 309 funds get cut back and the new program gets funded. Infrastructure isn't sexy. Infrastructure doesn't have a lot of political pull behind it, and yet infrastructure is vital to government. It is vital to the health of a municipality. It is vital to that municipality's lifeblood. It is ability to attract new business. It is ability to offer citizens a high quality of life. It is a strange dichotomy. Here is this thing that we take for granted, our sewers, our waters, our utility services, our public buildings, those things that we commonly use for all kinds of public services and public good. But because they have blended in, because they aren't people oriented in one sense, because we take them for granted,