

meet these projections. Even if we have the revenue over the next year, it is not going to be sustainable, in my mind and many of our minds. This MRF bill goes out 20 years, that's a loss of revenue for 20 years, so I think it would only be proper to add three cents on, raise our cigarette tax from 27 cents, which it is now, to 30 cents. I remind you, for...I will give selective figures, I will admit, from several states, not all states are as high as ours now. On the other hand, Iowa is 34 cents a pack now. Washington State is 31 cents; Minnesota is 38 cents; Wisconsin is 30 cents. So there are several as high or higher than we are. Admittedly, there are some, or several, many, most, majority are lower than us. That should be beside the point. The fact that Nebraska needs the revenue, I do not feel that we can afford to give away \$4.5 million of income this year, let alone down the road and specifically down the road. We just can't afford to give away that tax base down the road no matter how good the cause. I voted against the original proposal to pull this from committee for that reason. It's not that I don't recognize the fact the municipalities need this money for their infrastructure but the point is that somebody has to pay and when we give away some of our state base that historically have been using, we've not...you're probably going to hear more about it in time of the good causes that we really need in some of our capital construction funding that we have needs that are begging. So I would urge you to consider three cents. I'm not after the tobacco industry in this case, it's just the fact that if we're going to give away three cents, then I maintain we ought to replace it, and that is my proposal.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Discussion? Senator Schellpeper, followed by Senator Landis.

SENATOR SCHELLPEPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members, I rise in opposition to this amendment. We didn't put any tax increase when we debated LB 84 the other day and that's a lot bigger expenditure than this. And I don't think that we should put a tax increase at this time. I'm not saying that eventually we may not have to do something like this, but I think on first reading we do not have to put a cigarette tax at this time. LB 683 is my priority bill this year and I do not think that by putting this on we are really helping the cities. I think we need to eventually let this bill work its way through the system like all the others and then at the end if it looks like we have to do something, we can. But, at this time, I think we should reject this amendment. Thank you.