

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Landis, further discussion, followed by Senators Hall and Warner.

SENATOR LANDIS: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I hope that I have not in any way minimized what LB 683 is. LB 683 is a \$4.5 million bill. Comes out of the General Fund. Comes out of the General Fund by way of the cigarette tax which is collected, is then spent for certain earmarked capital projects and what's left over out of those projects winds up going into the General Fund. No doubt about it and if I have...if in any way I have not owned up to the fact that this is a \$4.5 million bill that stretches 20 years out of there and ultimately comes out of the General Fund, let me make sure that that's in the record. The question is, is it one of our budgeting priorities? The Appropriations Committee and others have identified a certain amount in the growth of revenues that we have had as being sustainable growth. And the question is, should this bill take its place in that portion of our revenue increase which is proving to be...or which at this point is assumed to be sustainable? I say yes. Maybe Senator Wehrbein says no. The normal progression is to get these bills up to Final Reading, compare the cost of the bills to how much revenue we have of different kinds and to make an adjustment as to what is the most important things to do on the table. My suggestion is just as indigent care did not have a tax increase with it, that this would not necessarily have a tax increase in it. We get the spending bills up there, you see how much money there is to spend. You see how much you want to do and we make sure that the books balance. Seems reasonable to me. In that sense, I don't think there is a single bill that's been on General File for which we have attached a revenue source to match it. Now if we have had one, correct me, but I don't think we spent...had a single spending bill whether it's been in education or in property tax relief or in anything else that's had an accompanying revenue package for it and it alone. Why? Because we fund a General Fund. This is a General Fund expenditure. You bet. Guilty. Ultimately, it will come out of the General Fund. The question is, is it an appropriation that this body would make as a greater priority than other A bills that are up there, other budgetary priorities that are going to get there through the courtesy of the Appropriations Committee? And in that sense it is too early to consider the notion of a separate revenue source for this bill as absent the discussions on other bills. So, with that, I oppose the Wehrbein amendment.