

proponents of these amendments say that the purpose behind them and the purpose behind MIREF is to ease the burden on property taxes. It just...it doesn't wash in terms of you can't have it both ways, I guess. The issue here is one of where do we make our cuts from, and do they...do the cuts get spread to the entire population being subdivisions of governments, and, yes, being cities, and that is spread across all taxpayers at the local level; or is it something that is limited to targeted groups of individuals which is what we have basically done in many of the other proposals? We have targeted out specific sectors that we have provided services to and we said we're going to cut those. All LB 11 does is continue what I consider to be probably the less painless of all the types of cuts that we do, even though I don't necessarily always agree with them, and that's an, in effect, an across-the-board cut. All this does is say in the area of MIREF, we're going to cut state aid to local subdivisions, we're not going to share as much of our tax base as we have in the past, and it should not in any way affect property tax dollars. If MIREF is exactly what it purports to be by the supporters of it, a little extra so that some of those special kinds of things get done, then we are not attacking the property tax base. We're only attacking the little extra, we're taking the cream off the top, if you will, and we're not even taking all of it. You're also talking about, in this case, frankly the...you know, a program that I opposed from the beginning, because you're talking about a 20-year appropriation of cigarette taxes. I mean there's been, on average, about a 5 percent reduction in cigarette tax revenue that's been collected each year for the last ten years. That is probably going to...that trend is probably going to continue and it's going to continue to, if anything, it may very likely increase. Now that's a great argument for the proponents of this, saying, well, then that means less money is going to be available. There is going to be less money available all the way along. And to argue that this is some kind of manna from heaven for local subdivisions to have this MIREF out there is ridiculous, because by the time the 20-year cycle rolls around, halfway through that cycle, 7 years down the road, if this program has been in place 3, it's going to dry up. There is not going to be any money there. We're better, at this point now, to cut the proposal and let the subdivisions know that this is not some kind of source, unending source of revenue that you can count on. They were so desperate to expand their tax base so they didn't have to make the kinds of decisions that we have to make on a regular basis here, the tough decisions in terms of