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April 13, 1999 LB 505

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Debate on the Landis amendment? Senator Tyson.

SENATOR TYSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. I don't intend to spend a lot of time, of your time, speaking about LB 505, which I am going to vote against. I'm going to vote against the amendments. I'm going to vote against the bill. The only thing I will not vote against is an IPP or a bracket, which I will not offer. I am firmly against the use of tobacco, not only by teenagers, but by anyone. I will not dispute a single fact of Senator Landis' that he offered just a few moments ago, except perhaps it's possible that the price elasticity argument that he offered may not be quite true. But I don't know about that, so I'm going to stay away from that. There is one thing that I object to in LB 505. I think smoking is probably the stupidest thing that people can do. And I was stupid for 47 years. One thing, however, I'm very clear on and that is that you should not use taxation to coerce social behavior, because the taxation you place on cigarettes now will be placed on whatever you may like in the future. It is wrong in principle, it is wrong in fact. Now the objective of LB 505 is praiseworthy. I started smoking at a very early age, at the 13-year mark that Senator Landis referred to. I was finally able to quit when I was 60-years old. One was the dumbest thing I ever did, and the other one was one of the smartest things I ever did, because no one smokes for even a limited length of time without doing themselves physical damage. If there were a way to totally outlaw tobacco in this land, not Nebraska, the United States, make it the western hemisphere, I would vote to do so, I would work to do so. But I will not vote to use taxation as a means of accomplishing that. I think we're talking here about something that is very basic, at least to me it's very basic. Taxation should be used to raise the costs necessary to run the minimum amount of government. It should not be used to make you do something that you don't want to do, or that I don't want to do. There are a number of other arguments against LB 505, and I will offer none of them. I will only appeal to you to do something that you may not like to do, and that is to vote against LB 505 and to do it solely for the reason that it is wrong to tax people to coerce their behavior. Having said that, I have said everything I intend to say. Thank you very much. Balance of my time to the Chair.