

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

April 13, 1999 LB 505

smoking. I think it is harmful. We know the harmful effects. But I do not believe, I do not believe that raising the taxes is going to deter cigarette smoking, because, like I say, it is an addiction that if it's going to cost another 30 cents a pack, people are either going to buy them, pay the 30 cents, or they're going to go across the border and purchase them where they can buy them much cheaper. So again, I am against it because I think we're going to be taking ourselves out of something to tax. And although I'm against smoking, I don't think this is a solution to our problem. Thank you.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Suttle.

SENATOR SUTTLE: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the Legislature. We've been talking about taxing, and I being a health provider want to go back to looking at the reasons it's a good idea to increase this tax. Higher cigarette prices increase the number of pregnant women who quit smoking, and also improve the birth weight of babies born to those women, according to a new study published in the April issue of the Journal of Public Economics. The study shows that every 10 percent increase in cigarette prices results in a 5 percent drop in smoking rates among pregnant women. The good news is that the drop in smoking rates by pregnant women, in response to higher cigarette prices, results in an increase in the birth weight of babies born to these women. The study funded by the Substance Abuse Policy Research Program of the Robert Wood Foundation...Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is the first to show that pregnant women are responsive to changes in cigarette prices. The data of this study came from nearly 10 million births in the National Natality Detail File of the National Center for Health Statistics, which contains pregnancy and birth-related information, including information about birth outcomes, demographic characteristics and maternal smoking. I think this alone would be a reason to encourage an increase in cigarette price, if we can keep babies healthier and their mothers healthier. I have received a lot of mail on this bill. I've been called a lot of names. I've been...I've been told that they're going to come and get me if I support this. Well they're just, I guess, going to have to come and get me, because I am going to support this, because I think it's the right thing to do for the health of our babies. Thank you, Mr. President.