

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

April 13, 1999 LB 505

and the statistics would prove it that he said, put us to the test. Put us to the test. We are so confident that this will be effective that we will put a sunset on it ourselves. And if we can't prove it with the data at that point in time, then we will not stand in your way to make this go away. But I think that we're being unfair to the children in Nebraska, to the unborn children in Nebraska, to the adults in Nebraska and to the population that does not smoke and bears the cost socially and economically if we do not put this state to the test and see if we cannot reduce a very, very strong health problem in our state. Thank you.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. I would like to just add my concern about teen smoking in the state, but also to talk about it from a public policy perspective that's a little different than some of the previous speakers. A lot of the research that we have done on tobacco in the United States, of course, is related to health, but a large body of research has been done on tobacco as a risk factor towards other behaviors, particularly for children and adolescents, and some of the things that we have learned about children who take this risk and begin to smoke is that they then take other risks. It's a gateway to other behaviors. Many of those we're working on in other policy areas that we need to continue to work on to discourage in children. But children who smoke at an early age also tend to take risks with other drugs. They're found to be involved in more fights. They carry weapons. They engage in high-risk sexual behavior, use alcohol and other drugs. These aren't to say that tobacco causes this, but it is a risk factor that leads to other behaviors that are very serious and that we're addressing on a lot of other fronts. So I support this bill because I believe, even though it's a very difficult one and it does create a burden to smokers in terms of the money that they pay for cigarettes, that the larger policy issues that we've heard about this morning in trying to address those issues of teen smoking are...are...far outweigh the problems that may be caused by a little additional taxation. I would just like to give you a few statistics on these risks, because I think they're important to our discussion. Children age 12 to 17 who smoke are 19 times likelier to move on to drugs