

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

April 13, 1999 LB 505

Actually, in truth, the increase in taxes has lagged on the basis of total revenue of tobacco companies. I did get a letter, and perhaps some of the rest of you did, from a professor who is the head of the Department of Pediatrics at Creighton University Medical School. I just want to quote one sentence out of it. He says, and I quote, the arguments made by the tobacco industry are self-serving and without merit. For example, they argue that the tax will unfairly target the poor in our state. This is incredibly hypocritical. This is an incredibly hypocritical claim from an industry that has reaped immense profits from poor people addicted to cigarettes for decades. And I think this is what the bottom line actually is, it is an industry that has targeted young people, targeted working people, increased its profits and revenues greatly, much more and at a higher ratio than taxes have been increased, and I think that the amendment that Senator Landis has brought to us, to increase the tax only 30 cents a pack, is well within reason and is well justified on the basis of the financial statistics of this industry. Thank you.

**SPEAKER KRISTENSEN:** Senator Bruning.

**SENATOR BRUNING:** Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I have struggled with LB 505 and my decision here. Like all of us, we've received literally hundreds of letters and phone calls. For a couple of days, one distributor in Omaha was writing my name and number on every carton of cigarettes he sold, saying, this Senator is on the fence, give him a call. And it was all that Holly, in my office, could do, for three days, was to answer the phone as fast as those calls were coming in. Reason prevailed, we called him, and he stopped doing that. We asked him to make it a petition and give us the names that way, and he did. But I have struggled with this decision, because I agree with the goal of reducing teen smoking, I agree wholeheartedly. That's where I think the facts...you can't argue with the fact that most people start smoking as a teen, that smoke throughout their lives and die of smoking. And at lunch today, Senator Crosby, I apologize for not being at the poverty luncheon, but my wife said, Jon, we need to go look for birth announcements; we're going to have a child here in three weeks. She wanted to look for birth announcements, so I went with her to look for birth announcements. And we stopped at