

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

April 13, 1999 LB 505

Taco Inn, my old haunt, near Lincoln Southeast High School, where I used to eat lunch, in the late eighties, when I was in school there. And there were four girls sitting next to us, smoking. And I couldn't resist, and I walked over there and I said, hey, I'm not the police or anything, I know I'm in a suit, but I got to ask you a question. I'm a state senator, you're teens, right? And they said, yeah. You go to Southeast? Yes, we do. And you're smoking. We're debating a bill right now that would raise the price 30 cents a pack, about \$3 a carton. Would that slow you down? Would that stop you from smoking? And the girls looked at me and they said, no way. I said, why not? Don't you care about money? You know, you're not rich people, right? You're just...you're kids. And they said, yeah. Why wouldn't it slow you down? And they said, because we smoke because it makes our parents mad, we smoke because it's cool. And I thought, that's refreshing honesty. I think that's probably why they smoke, yeah, it's to rebel against their parents. And I started thinking maybe this isn't the way to do it. And I talked with Senator Landis earlier. Senator Landis, I'm here, I want to pledge to you right now that if you want to make enforcement for cigarette smoking the same as it is for liquor offenses, I will support that. If you want to make it like an MIP ticket, a minor in possession ticket, I will support that. If you want to make it like procuring alcohol for a minor, the same penalties, procuring tobacco for a minor, I will support that. And I tell you, when I was in high school the MIP penalties, it didn't stop us from drinking, I have to admit, I was no angel. We still tried, we still tried to find the money, no matter what it took, but it sure slowed us down. We didn't stand on the street corner, outside of Pound Junior High or Lincoln Southeast with a beer in our hand. But kids did stand outside with a cigarette in their hand. The penalties are not the same, the stigma is not the same. You don't get a ticket, maybe you can, but I don't know anybody it's ever happened to. And I know lots of people that have gotten minor in possession tickets. That does slow kids down. And this year we pass a bill that says they could lose their driver's license if they get caught drinking. Maybe they should lose their driver's license if they get caught with tobacco, if they're under age. Senator Landis, I will support penalties to slow down teen smoking, because I agree with the goal. But I can't support a tax that I think will cause folks to go across the border. I